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DECEMBER 2000
NUMBER 108

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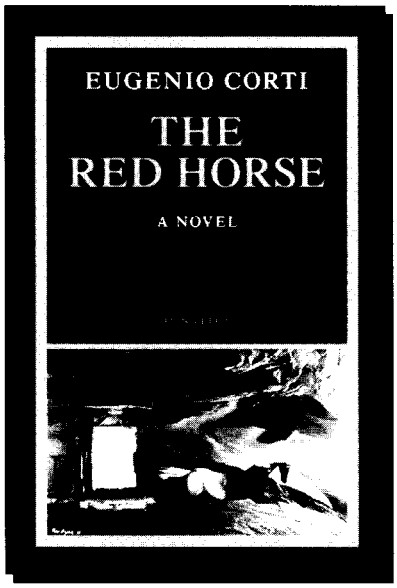


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# Correspondence

## Animal Rights

David R. Carlin presents a believable argument in the first few paragraphs of "Rights, Animal and Human" (August/September). He seems well versed in nonscientific historical tidbits; however, he derails himself when he begins discussing Darwin, biology, and how these relate to human nature.

Professor Carlin's essay betrays a profound and, unfortunately, widespread misconception of what evolutionary biology is and why it is useful. He claims Darwinism is the "greatest of all attempts to narrow the gap between humans and the lower animals." As one who has studied genetics and mechanisms of evolution for most of her life—evolution by natural selection being the one with which I am most familiar—I can say with a high degree of confidence that Prof. Carlin has no clear idea of what "Darwinism" means. As a scientist, *I* have trouble defining a term that has been so carelessly bandied about over the last century and a half. Darwin's theory of evolution, as understood by most of the modern scientific community, has nothing to say about the "gap" between humans and "lower" animals, because no such gap is recognized. We are animals. Specifically, we are hominids. We are swimming, along with every other vertebrate, in the sea of the Animal Kingdom.

Prof. Carlin goes on to discuss what Darwinism, or Darwin's audience, has to say about the ontological rank of human nature. The word he should use here is ontogenetic. Ontogeny, in the realm of biology, refers to the physical developmental history of an organism. Biology has absolutely nothing to say about metaphysical matters, and this is how it should be. A misguided, 150-year-old stance taken by Darwin's "epigones" serves no purpose in current scientific inquiry as it relates to human origins. Today, biologists are keenly aware that their tools are limited to the study of what they can physically evaluate. Good science has nothing to say about God or about humanity's spiritual place in the universe.

All too often, that silence is mistaken for an attempt to disprove or degrade spiritual concepts. In fact, the silence is a kind of humility. We recognize that our tool kit, which includes the "scientific method," simply should not be used for spiritual inquiry. Prof. Carlin does not appear to be acquainted with very many scientists. Most of us are too busy to demote human nature, considering our schedules are full of research, writing grant proposals, teaching, mentoring, publishing papers, and performing community service. Therefore, his assertion that we are anti-Christian attackers of all that is spiritual can be dismissed as an uninformed emotional rant.

The parallel Carlin draws between Hitler and students of evolutionary theory, however, cannot be viewed with such detached amusement. Hitler was a madman, incapable of truly understanding any complex scientific argument. Hitler used everything at his disposal to demonize Jews (and many Christians) and to fan the flames of German nationalism. Any theory promoted by the Nazis was filtered through a lens of lunacy and hate. It simply does not follow that Hitler's warped interpretation of any scientific theory is something with which a sane human being, scientifically literate or not, would agree. Prof. Carlin's assertion to the contrary is not only breathtakingly insulting, it is wrong. His statement that one "cannot prove that an idea is wrong simply because Hitler em-



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braced it" is irrelevant in the face of such tortured logic.

Prof. Carlin is correct in saying he cannot prove the danger and inhumanity inherent in the concept of animal rights. He would have a doozy of a time just proving himself worthy of being published in these pages.

Mary E. Leonard
Eugene, Oregon

David R. Carlin sees the animal rights movement as anti-Christian and an attempt to promote a purely biological concept of human nature, thus linking it to Hitler and the Holocaust.

This is quite an assessment of a movement that in its Christian expression traces a concern for the rights of animals back to St. Basil and St. John Chrysostom and, in its later formulations, to John Wesley, Cardinal Newman, and John Paul II.

Rather than attempting to have animals classified as "persons," which Professor Carlin says would "narrow the gap between humans and the lower animals," the Christian animal rights movement wants them to be recognized as the sentient beings they are, demonstrably capable of physical and emotional suffering. Currently, animals are relegated to the category of "things" and, as such, are not entitled to the compassion and care they deserve.

Their entitlement is biblical: religious laws regulated the kind and amount of work animals could be expected to do and mandated how and when they were to be fed and cared for; they legislated the rights of animals. Yet Prof. Carlin finds the concept of animal rights to be "extraordinarily dangerous" and considers those who promote this idea to be "enemies of the human race."

He is also concerned that efforts to upgrade the status of animals are an attempt to "degrade humans." But in view of the fact that God entered into a covenantal relationship with animals as well as with men, this concern seems misplaced.

J. R. Hyland
Sarasota, Florida

**David R. Carlin replies:**
Regarding Mary Leonard's letter: In discussing Darwinism, a distinction needs to be made between Darwinism as a *scientific* theory (or a family of scientific theories) and Darwinism as *metaphysics*. I think my essay made it clear that my strictures were intended to apply to metaphysical Darwinism, not scientific Darwinism. Ms. Leonard's contention that Darwinian biologists do not engage in metaphysical speculation is, therefore, beside the point, for I never said they did. But surely she knows that there have been many other Darwinians, from Thomas Henry Huxley in Darwin's day to Richard Dawkins today, who have gone beyond the boundaries of pure science and used "Darwinism" as a metaphysical stick with which to beat theism in general and Christianity in particular.

Ms. Leonard doesn't have a high opinion of Hitler's scientific abilities; neither do I. But the fact remains that his thinking was influenced by metaphysical Darwinism. Does Ms. Leonard want to assert that metaphysical Darwinism contributed nothing to the formation of his genocidal thought?

Regarding J. R. Hyland's complaint: I suggest that he reread my essay. He will then discover that my objection is to viewing animals as bearers of *rights*. It doesn't follow from this that I am in favor of cruelty to animals, which of course I am not. As for the very strange contention that St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, John Wesley, Cardinal Newman, and Pope John Paul II were concerned with the "rights of animals"—I deny it. They may have favored treating animals in a kindly manner, but this is a very different thing from asserting that animals have rights.

## Judaism and the Market

Thank you for presenting a Jewish perspective on the relationship between the market economy and religion (Jonathan Sacks, "Markets and Morals," August/September). As a Jew and a subscriber to FIRST THINGS since the first issue, I have looked for contributions to the debate from other than Christian and secular points of view.

The quotation from Michael Novak and his reference to Jewish worldliness and a candid orientation towards private property is interesting. Unfortunately, although we Jews in North America have been blessed by the ability to prosper within a democratic capitalistic system, not enough of us, in my experience, consider the capitalist system positively and are instead too often advocates for laws and government

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regulation to control the "excesses of the market place." The argument is usually based on the Jewish requirement to do good deeds and particularly to promote "social justice" (ignoring Frederick Hayek's masterpiece *The Mirage of Social Justice*). I have been forced to quote Michael Novak and others, since I could find few defenses of the market from the point of view of Judaism. This may have been my failing, but now, in any case, I have Rabbi Sacks to rely on.

Reuben Bromstein
Toronto, Ontario
Canada

## Against Principalities and Powers

In While We're At It (August/September), Richard John Neuhaus praises David Blankenhorn of the Institute for American Values for noting "some encouraging signs" in governmental efforts to support marriage and the family.

In response to critics of the "nanny state," Father Neuhaus notes that politicians and their programs inevitably affect marriage and family life and that we should therefore "try to tilt them toward virtue."

From a historical perspective, it is clear that the governments of the world have failed miserably in these and similar self-assigned tasks. In view of that, why do we continually look to government for guidance? Don't we know the ethic of government is generated by polls? Why do we attempt alliance between light and darkness? Do we really think we can dominate government for good?

In *Conscience and Obedience*, William Stringfellow has it right, I think: "The principalities (governments, institutions, and even the church) are autonomous in relation to humans; they are created beings in their own right, not simply projections of human life, and their demonic character as fallen powers is no mere consequence of human sin either personal or corporate." For believers to think or hope well of such powers seems inappropriate and juvenile.

Fr. Neuhaus might be forgiven his Luther-like pigeonholing of life into roles that often are in conflict (magistrate and clergy, to use Luther's example) if it weren't so pernicious. As people called to discipleship and the making of disciples of Jesus, Christians are filled with his Good News. Under his ultimate government all roles are subject to his discipline and none of us are required to bear the state's sword (we bear the sword of the Word); we simply observe that the state has the sword and uses it with alacrity against all.

The notion that those same enslaved politicians might somehow help us "rescue" marriage is risible. We biblical people are the new creation in Christ and it is our responsibility to share that life with all humans. We make disciples and good marriages follow. We mustn't be led astray by our desire to be accepted and influential and so feed the egos of those self-important lords and oppressors of all creation.

Rampant demonic character cannot be tilted toward virtue.

William T. Hunter, Jr.
Santo Domingo
Dominican Republic

## Acton Reconsidered

Regarding "Lord Acton, Cardinal Newman, and How To Be Ahead of Your Time" (Public Square, August/September): More than thirty years ago I read Acton's electrifying inaugural lecture as Regius professor at Cambridge. Since then Acton has been a hero to me, and his writings, in the phrase he himself used of Burke, "the law and the prophets." I revere him as one of the great Catholic English men since Tudor times—along with More, Fisher, Pope, Hopkins, Chesterton, and possibly even Newman. For me the greatness and exhilaration of Acton lay in his transcendence of the defensiveness and equivocation that characterized Catholic reaction to our past when I was growing up.

Here was a man of penetrating intelligence and formidable scholarship who told it as he saw it. He did not just detail with forensic remorselessness the connivance of Gregory XIII in the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. He also saw that "even in this narrow and disedifying section of history (the period since the Reformation) the action of Christ who is risen on mankind whom he redeemed fails not, but increases." For me, Acton's writings are a more effective reply than the *Apologia* to Charles Kingsley's charge that Catholics are careless of the truth.

A century later, we are living in the closing years of a pontificate that has, above all, taught Catholics not to be afraid—afraid of those who hate the

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Church so that we do not honestly contemplate the failings of our own past; afraid of the progress of science so that we needed to be reminded by the Pope "that faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth." More than any of his contemporaries Acton was the prophet of a spirit of fundamental confidence and fearlessness in the Church.

I read FIRST THINGS because it shares this spirit. I was therefore very interested to read Richard John Neuhaus' review of a new biography of Acton. Sadly, the review was in many places an unworthy reaction to the complexity, integrity, and intelligence of Acton. The throwaway allegation that the offer of the Regius professorship was "the Protestant establishment's reward for services rendered" is an appalling and unsubstantiated calumny. The charge that Acton was as Erastian as the Archbishop of Canterbury will not survive the most cursory reading of his essay "The Protestant Theory of Persecution."

Acton said of himself that he never had contemporaries. One hundred years later he still stands in need of appreciation as a great Catholic figure.

T. E. Conlon
Reading, Berkshire
England

**RJN replies:**
There is much about Lord Acton that is admirable and I could have accented that more than I did in my discussion of Roland Hill's biography, *Lord Acton*. I chose to concentrate on the differences between Acton and Newman in their response to the First Vatican Council. It is amply documented, by Hill and others, that Acton took the side of the Protestant establishment in England, that the same establishment was fulsome in its expression of gratitude to Acton and, among other gifts, bestowed upon him the Regius professorship. Reward is the right word. There is no calumny involved. From the viewpoint of those who gave it, the reward was amply deserved. I should have noted that, more important than the professorship in stabilizing Acton's worrisome financial circumstance, was the generous benefactor who purchased his sixty-thousand-volume library, which, after Acton's death, was given to the University Library at Cambridge, where it is today housed in a special chamber in the center of the building.

### Brooks and Bobos

I am in awe of Richard John Neuhaus' monthly Public Square.


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Does the man never sleep? How does he have time to read and think about all that stuff? So if I'm going to write one letter defending my book *Bobos in Paradise*—which up to now I haven't—I'm going to do it in response to the unfair treatment it received in While We're At It (August/September).

Father Neuhaus has me as a defender of the spiritual life of today's upper middle class. He quotes my argument that these burghers have a quotidian morality, which is repelled by concrete wrongs but is unconcerned with transcendent truths. He then reports that I endorse this morality and quotes me, "This is a good morality for building a decent society."

Actually, in the book there is no period at the end of that sentence. Instead, there is a comma after the word "society." The full sentence reads, "This is a good morality for building a decent society, but maybe not one for people interested in things in the next world, like eternal salvation, for example." If Father Neuhaus had room to quote me more fully, your readers would have seen that my point throughout that chapter is that Bobos resemble the Last Man—their spiritual lives are tepid and flat, genial but mediocre. They settle for present comforts over transcendent virtues.

Fr. Neuhaus insinuates that I am not a true conservative because I've gone too Bobo. I confess that I may not live up to his rigorous standards, but it is not because I am blind to the spiritual philistinism of today's upper middle classes.

David Brooks
Washington, D.C.

**RJN replies:**
Mr. Brooks is right about the comma, and I should have quoted the entire sentence. At the same time, his book is written in the voice of "We Bobos," and it is not always clear when he is distinguishing himself from the people he is describing. It is good to be reassured that he has not been blinded by the world he depicts with an incisiveness and wit that—in partial response to his question—kept me up late.

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THIS TIME

# Peace When?

*James Nuechterlein*

It seems that Bill Clinton won't get that Nobel Peace Prize after all. On no issue of foreign policy has he expended more time and energy than settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict, and after almost eight years of effort he has precisely nothing to show for it. Indeed, worse than nothing. As I write, the President has just returned from the mini-summit at Sharm el Sheik in Egypt. He may have managed to get the worst of the fighting in the region over—although the situation remains unsettled and edgy at this point—but relations between the parties in the Middle East are not just worse than they were when he took office, they are about as bad as they can be short of war. Just weeks ago, the President appeared tantalizingly close to achieving the "comprehensive settlement" of the Middle Eastern conflict that has beguiled American diplomats for decades. Now, everything is in shambles. What went wrong?

The simplest answer is that Clinton pushed the "peace process" beyond its capacity to respond. Reliable reports indicate that Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat urged the U.S. not to insist on the Camp David summit in July. He anticipated, it seems clear, that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak would make enough concessions on disputed issues that the Palestinians would find themselves under pressure to make reciprocal gestures that they were unwilling or unable to offer. That, in fact, is how things turned out. A reluctant Arafat, pressured by the U.S., showed up for the summit, but resisted Clinton's insistent cajoling that he respond in kind to Barak's expansive compromises. And in the aftermath of the summit's failure, the "Arab street" exploded, the Israelis responded with their usual firmness, and the region reverted to its normal condition of smoldering bitterness.

But it was not simply Clinton who had "peace is at hand" delusions. Prime Minister Barak was as eager for Camp David as Arafat was reluctant, and he apparently persuaded himself that he had proposals for a settlement so forthcoming that they would constitute an offer the Palestinians could not refuse. He would grant statehood, make concessions on territory in the West Bank and on the right of return for refugees, and even—something no Israeli government had ever before considered—put up for negotiation the status of Jerusalem as his nation's united and undivided capital. But the Palestinians—supported by the major Arab powers—would not take yes for an answer and refused a deal, even a deal that would accept a number of Israeli concessions and leave other matters open for further discussion.

Barak's proffered concessions were so unprecedented—especially in light of his earlier offers to Syria to surrender Israeli control of the Golan Heights—that some observers saw in them a cunning plot. The Prime Minister, in this reading, meant to reveal to his fellow countrymen—especially those on the left—the depth of Arab obduracy and thus rid them of their illusions that a peace that does not rob Israel of its security, indeed of its very existence, can be had. In so doing he would recall his nation to the recognition that it can rely for survival not on the good will of its neighbors but only on its own will and determination.

That reading seems to me too clever by half—it attributes to Barak a Machiavellian imagination he has not otherwise displayed—but it does obliquely suggest a quite different, and more plausible, interpretation of the Prime Minister's behavior. Barak, it appears, has concluded that his nation lacks the heart to continue indefinitely in the cold peace—interrupted sporadically by nation-threatening wars—that has marked its existence from the beginning.

Israel wants to be an ordinary nation. It is no longer the utopian society of its founding. The radically egalitarian kibbutzim that were to be the justification of its being are now mostly museum pieces. Its people are prosperous and—their relation to their neighbors always emphatically aside—comfortable in their bourgeois situation. They are weary of eternal vigilance and of the perennial danger of losing their children to war or terrorism. They do not want to become a callous people, and they are, to their credit, morally uneasy with the prospect of maintaining indefinite control over millions of Palestinians in the West Bank. They desire, above all, to rid themselves of the condition of being forever on the brink of mobilization for war.

That, at least, is my reading of Barak's reading of the Israeli situation. And it suggests grave danger. Israel desperately seeks peace—and in its desperation is its weakness. The Machiavellian interpretation of Barak's policy is depressingly correct in one instance: its calculation of Arab attitudes toward Israel. Israel wants coexistence with its neighbors. Its neighbors want Israel not to be there. They may, with enormous grudging, recognize the brute fact of Israel's existence. But the evidence is overwhelming that they do not—

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and in the foreseeable future will not—accept the legitimacy of its existence.

The incapacity of otherwise sensible people—including, unfortunately, not a few people in Israel—to understand this fundamental discrepancy between Arabs and Israelis never ceases to amaze. One reads of Israeli leftists being surprised and disappointed by Arafat's manifest unwillingness to seek peace and one wonders: from what distant planet have they recently returned? There continues to exist, to borrow Peter Berger's nice phrase, a demented evenhandedness with which observers describe the Middle Eastern situation. They typically picture rivals equally drenched in primal hatreds, equally obsessed with the intolerable presence of the other. But this is simply not so.

Palestinians in particular and Arabs in general see themselves as victims of a monstrous Zionism with which they have not come to terms and do not want to come to terms. The Israelis, by contrast, are so anxious for a normal existence that they will do virtually anything, short of committing national suicide, to find agreement with their antagonists. This is not to suggest that they are suffused with good feelings toward the Arabs. They aren't—but neither are they consumed by hatred of them. One needn't ascribe this difference in attitudes to higher moral sensibilities on the part of the Israelis—they are, after all, the winners in the region and not the losers—but it utterly confuses clear thinking about the situation to pretend that the difference is not there.

It is often suggested that the difference is not so great as it appears on the surface. Whatever the views of the Arab street, it is said, Arab leaders know full well that they must, in some sense and at some time, make their peace with Israel. But the fact is that those leaders, in disseminating vicious anti-Israel propaganda in their state-run media, keep the hatreds of the street alive—and then point to the hatreds they have so carefully nourished to explain why their options in making peace with the Jewish state are so limited. The proof of the Arab leaders' true attitudes is in their behavior, and their behavior to date gives us no reason to believe that they do not mean what they say when they routinely insist that the existence of "the Zionist entity" is an intolerable affront to Arab honor.

That, at least, is what any prudent leader of Israel surely must take to be the case. Ehud Barak's insouciant assurance that he can procure an acceptable peace with the Arabs on his own terms has shown itself, at least to date, to be a most imprudent policy—which is why his position as leader of the nation is, as I write, seriously in question. The melancholy reality is that a comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East remains a project for the long haul—perhaps the very long haul. That being the case, it is the duty of Israeli leaders to steel their people to avoid illusions of an easy peace and to summon them to the continuing sacrifices and frustrations that are the price of their survival. Shimon Peres may dream all he wants of "a new Middle East," but for the foreseeable future it remains just that—a poignant but perilous dream.

As for American leaders, on this point, at least, George W. Bush has it right. They should forsake Wilsonian grandiosities, and accept the fact that if there is to be a timetable for peace in the region, it must be drawn up by those who live there and not by outsiders beguiled by visions of a nice little capstone to their political careers. Stockholm will have to wait. FT

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# Opinion

# Joe Lieberman as Rorschach Test

*Marc Gellman*

*As this issue goes to press, the result of the November election is unknown. But whatever the outcome, the nomination of Joseph I. Lieberman is a moment of truth for American Jews. The following essay was originally given as a sermon by Rabbi Gellman on Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year.*

Even if this were not the season of confession, I would freely admit to many foolish conceits and unwarranted prejudices. One of them is a prejudice against Jews who collect duck decoys. I want to ask them, "Why are you doing this? Do you enjoy duck hunting, or is this collection of duck decoys more the result of your love of gentiles than your love of ducks? Duck hunting is *their* sport. Our sport is golf, or gin rummy."

The assimilationist hunger among Jews is epitomized for me by a clothing manufacturer named Ralphie Lipshitz who, with the aid of some blond gentile models, some flannel clothes, and, yes, a few duck decoys, became Ralph Lauren—a Jew who out-gentiled the gentiles. Irving Berlin, a cantor's son who changed his name from Israel Baline, stoked the assimilationist legacy with his music. In 1942, when Auschwitz was belching smoke, Irving Berlin was belting out the music for "White Christmas," the most popular Christmas song ever. It was a fitting complement to another of his great hits, "Easter Parade." I have decided this *yontif* to finally forgive Ralphie Lipshitz and Israel Baline, and all the duck decoy Jews, because they were all born before Joe Lieberman.

The selection of the first Jew—that is, the first Jew who had not already become an Episcopalian—to run on a national ticket is not a small thing. Not since Sandy Koufax decided not to pitch in the World Series thirty-five years ago has a Jew entered the national consciousness of America in so deep and complex a way.

Joe Lieberman's selection has definitively ended the assimilationist myth that in order to succeed in America you have to hide your Jewishness. How can duck decoy Jews let their kids skip out of synagogue to attend a soccer game when the possible Vice President of the United States is skipping out on a campaign strategy session to go to synagogue? In fact, one could argue that Lieberman was selected to run for the second highest office in the land not despite his Jewishness, but because of it. In his prophetic jeremiad against Bill Clinton and his attack on violence and pornography in the media, his faith and his morality, his piety and his politics, are conjoined—and they were considered assets, not liabilities, by Al Gore.

John F. Kennedy set the pre-Lieberman model for dealing with one's faith while running for high office. Kennedy built a firewall between his religion and his politics, claiming that his faith was a private matter and that it would not influence his public decisions in any way. The nine other Jewish Senators and thirty Congressmen who serve today all ran on the Kennedy plan. Senator Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey, for example, was the head of the United Jewish Appeal, but he never mentioned it during any of his campaigns. But the old way of separating one's religion from one's politics is dead and gone with Joe.

Another consequence of Joe Lieberman's selection is that the hysterical and, I believe, largely irrational fear of the Christian right harbored by so many Jews must now end. I am delighted that in his first campaign speech in Nashville Lieberman invoked God thirteen times. I am delighted that he went to a black Baptist church in Detroit and told a wildly cheering audience that America needs "a new spiritual awakening"—and then said, "The First Amendment promises us freedom of religion, not freedom from religion." He went on to say that he hoped his nomination would "encourage people to feel more free to talk about their faith" and reinforce the idea that "there must be a place for faith in America's public life." The next day in Chicago he called America "the most religious country in the world" and said that not only were Americans citizens of the same country, but that "we are also children of the same awesome God."

If a Christian politician had said these very same words, many Jews would have gone berserk. Abraham Foxman, head of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, did go berserk. But for most Jews the language of politically active faith doesn't now seem so frightening or subversive of the Constitution. Lieberman, in linking both the founding of the nation and morality to religion, was quoting John Adams and George Washington, not Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. used such language to condemn segregation and urge a change in America's laws, and nobody complained that he was violating the separation of church and state. It is unfair and hypocritical for us to accuse Christian conservatives of doing the

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same thing Christian liberals did at the time of Dr. King and that Joe Lieberman is doing now. The fact that a political position has its origins in faith ought not make it frightening or subversive. The fear in the Jewish community of politically active religious people ends with Lieberman, because he is one of them.

Another consequence of this historic selection is that it now frees Jews to vote against Lieberman even though he is Jewish. His selection is the historic moment that marks full Jewish acceptance in America—not the rise of Henry Kissinger, not the movies of Steven Spielberg, not the corporate mastery of Michael Eisner. None of them have done and none of them mean what Lieberman has done and what Lieberman means. True acceptance means that we as Jews can be delighted that he was nominated and then vote against him because we do not agree with his politics. Voting *for* Lieberman because he is Jewish is just as wrong as voting *against* Lieberman because he is Jewish. Acceptance means being considered for public office because of where you stand on the issues, not where you stand on the sabbath. Politics isn't baseball. There is no room in politics for irrational rooting for the hometown team. If you believe in Lieberman's political views, then you should vote for him; if you don't, then you shouldn't, and you should not feel as if you have betrayed Judaism or the Jewish people or God by your vote. And if you vote for him, it better be for more substantial reasons than simply the fact that he can pronounce a *chaf* and *layn torah*. I guarantee you that Jesse Jackson would not vote for Colin Powell just because he's black. Joe Lieberman's selection is important not because it tells us how to vote, but because it tells us how far we have come, and because it shows us the new possibilities for living a Jewish life that is public, political, and powerful.

Two hundred years ago Napoleon told the council of French Jews who were seeking civil rights after the French Revolution, "Everything to you as Frenchmen, nothing to you as Jews!" This Napoleonic deal has set the parameters of Jewish power since the Enlightenment and until Lieberman. After Napoleon the price for civil rights was a kind of cultural Judaiectomy, the excising of one's Jewishness from one's public life. Napoleon's deal was eagerly accepted by French Jews and other Jews of Europe who had been chafing under the burdens of institutionalized European anti-Semitism since the Crusades in the eleventh century. Yehudah Lieb Gordon gave voice to Napoleon's deal: "I will be a Jew in my tent, and a German on the street." But being a Jew in your tent was often not enough to satisfy the heirs of Napoleon. Often, conversion to Christianity was also necessary to prove one's national allegiance to the Christian culture of the state. Benjamin Disraeli's father had him baptized at the age of thirteen to lubricate his slide into the upper classes. When Queen Victoria asked Disraeli, then Prime Minister of England, if he was an Old Testament person or a New Testament person, he answered, "Neither. I am the blank page between the testaments."

Well, Joe Lieberman is not a blank page. The pages of his life are filled with Hebrew and Yiddish writing. In a campaign appearance in Florida with Al Gore, Tipper Gore, and Hadassah Lieberman, he called the Vice President and himself *nochshleppers* (hangers-on) in comparison to their beautiful wives. How can you not love the fact that for the first time in history the word *nochshlepper* has been used in an American political campaign! Lieberman is not campaigning on shabbat. He is turning down the pork ribs in Alabama, and if he is elected he is going to walk to the inauguration on Saturday afternoon. Lieberman is a new thing and he marks a new time. He is the first completely public Jew to run for high office anywhere at any time in Jewish history. Everything was given to him because he is a Jew, not because he is the senior Senator from Connecticut. With the selection of Joe Lieberman the Napoleonic deal is dead.

Let me ask you to ask yourselves, beyond what Joe Lieberman means to Jewish history and to the culture wars over politics and religion, what does his selection mean to you in your Jewish life? I think Joe Lieberman has become a kind of assimilationist Rorschach test for the American Jewish community, and many Jews are not happy to be tested in quite this way. Have you ever said to yourself, "He is just too Jewish for my tastes"? If so, go buy a duck decoy. Have you ever felt just a little twinge of embarrassment or discomfort that his wife's name is Hadassah and not Tipper or Muffy? If so, go buy a duck decoy. Does the fact that he can find time to go to *shul* on *shabbos* while you are out golfing make you think that there is something wrong with him? If so, go buy a duck decoy.

I was jolted into Jewish consciousness by Koufax's decision not to pitch on the Sabbath in the 1965 World Series. I took it as a personal challenge to do more for my Jewish life, to sacrifice more for the Jewish people, to assert with more vigor my pride in all things Jewish. Perhaps the selection of Joe Lieberman will have such an effect on some kid today. I pray that young Jews and others who are still impressionable might be moved into a deeper and more confident Jewish life because of this event.

Some Jews are scared to death that in the privacy of the voting booth, an anti-Semitic backlash will take place. Perhaps they are right; perhaps Napoleon was right. Acceptance in America obviously does not mean acceptance by every American. The *New York Times*

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recently reported that one in five Americans harbors some anti-Semitic beliefs, but I pray that this cancer of Jew hatred is dead or in remission in this great country of ours. I pray that Americans will listen to what Lincoln called "the better angels of our nature."

In the end, Joe Lieberman and his politically public Judaism may actually help to revive Judaism in America. Any religion, particularly Judaism, that is forced to become completely private is forced to become completely dead. Judaism gave the world the prophets, and the prophets gave the world the message that private rituals are not enough to please God. Although private religion might repair our broken hearts, it is incapable of repairing our broken world. On Yom Kippur we read from Isaiah 58, in which God condemns those who fast from eating but refuse to fast from oppressing their workers. On the day of our most inward and private rituals, we are jolted by Isaiah into a realization that God wants us to build a Judaism that has the public purchase and political vigor to fight for those who sleep in the dust and fast not because they are pious but because they are poor.

Would you really be more proud of and more connected to your Judaism if it had nothing to say about hunger or homelessness; nothing to say about capital punishment or abortion; nothing to say about euthanasia or rationing health care; nothing to say about genetic engineering or third world debt, violence or pornography, poverty or slavery? Would Judaism truly inspire you and uplift you, would it transform your soul and realize your dreams if it was merely a complete theory of candle lighting and bread blessing? One of the reasons why so many people care so little about Judaism is that Judaism—through its official interpreters, that is—seems to care so little about the great issues of our world. Napoleon forced us to privatize our Judaism, but many Jews have made a virtue out of that distorted and disfigured compact. Such a Judaism would be incomprehensible both to Isaiah and to God.

This is indeed a great and historic moment for Jews and for America, but it is also a great and historic challenge. Through this moment we may have the opportunity not only to bring Judaism closer to the world, but also perhaps to bring the world closer to Judaism. This is one election where we really can say that the phrase in the pledge of allegiance, "One Nation Under God," is not just a political slogan. It is the truth of our nation, and someday, perhaps, with God's help, it will be the truth of all nations.

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# Defining Social Justice

*Michael Novak*

Last year marked the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Friedrich Hayek, among whose many contributions to the twentieth century was a sustained and animated put-down of most of the usages of the term "social justice." I have never encountered a writer, religious or philosophical, who directly answers Hayek's criticisms. In trying to understand social justice in our own time, there is no better place to start than with the man who, in his own intellectual life, exemplified the virtue whose common misuse he so deplored.

The trouble with "social justice" begins with the very meaning of the term. Hayek points out that whole books and treatises have been written about social justice without ever offering a definition of it. It is allowed to float in the air as if everyone will recognize an instance of it when it appears. This vagueness seems indispensable. The minute one begins to define social justice, one runs into embarrassing intellectual difficulties. It becomes, most often, a term of art whose operational meaning is, "We need a law against that." In other words, it becomes an instrument of ideological intimidation, for the purpose of gaining the power of legal coercion.

Hayek points out another defect of twentieth-century theories of social justice. Most authors assert that they use it to designate a virtue (a moral virtue, by their account). But most of the descriptions they attach to it appertain to impersonal states of affairs—"high unemployment" or "inequality of incomes" or "lack of a living wage" are cited as instances of "social injustice." Hayek goes to the heart of the matter: social justice is either a virtue or it is not. If it is, it can properly be ascribed only to the reflective and deliberate acts of individual persons. Most who use the term, however, ascribe it not to individuals but to social systems. They use "social justice" to denote a regulative principle of order; again, their focus is not virtue but power.

The term "social justice" was first used in 1840 by a Sicilian priest, Luigi Taparelli d'Azeglio, and given prominence by Antonio Rosmini-Serbati in *La Costitutione Civile Secondo la Giustizia Sociale* in 1848. John Stuart Mill gave this anthropomorphic approach to social questions almost canonical status for modern thinkers thirteen years later in *Utilitarianism*:

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> Society should treat all equally well who have *deserved* equally well of it, that is, who have deserved equally well absolutely. This is the highest abstract standard of social and distributive justice; towards which *all institutions*, and the efforts of all virtuous citizens, *should be made in the utmost degree to converge*. [Emphasis added.]

Mill imagines that societies can be virtuous in the same way that individuals can be. Perhaps in highly personalized societies of the ancient type, such a usage might make sense—under kings, tyrants, or tribal chiefs, for example, where one person made all the crucial social decisions. Curiously, however, the demand for the term "social justice" did not arise until modern times, in which more complex societies operate by impersonal rules applied with equal force to all under "the rule of law."

The birth of the concept of social justice coincided with two other shifts in human consciousness: the "death of God" and the rise of the ideal of the command economy. When God "died," people began to trust a conceit of reason and its inflated ambition to do what even God had not deigned to do: construct a just social order. The divinization of reason found its extension in the command economy; reason (that is, science) would command and humankind would collectively follow. The death of God, the rise of science, and the command economy yielded "scientific socialism." Where reason would rule, the intellectuals would rule. (Or so some thought. Actually, the lovers of power would rule.)

From this line of reasoning it follows that "social justice" would have its natural end in a command economy in which individuals are told what to do, so that it would always be possible to identify those in charge and to hold them responsible. This notion presupposes that people are guided by specific external directions rather than internalized, personal rules of just conduct. It further implies that no individual should be held responsible for his relative position. To assert that he *is* responsible would be "blaming the victim." It is the function of "social justice" to blame somebody else, to blame *the system*, to blame those who (mythically) "control" it. As Leszek Kolakowski wrote in his magisterial history of communism, the fundamental paradigm of Communist ideology is guaranteed to have wide appeal: *you suffer; your suffering is caused by powerful others; these oppressors must be destroyed.* We need to hold someone accountable, Hayek notes, even when we recognize that such a protest is absurd.

We are not wrong, Hayek concedes, in perceiving that the effects of the individual choices and open processes of a free society are not distributed according to a recognizable principle of justice. The meritorious are sometimes tragically unlucky; the evil prosper; good ideas don't pan out, and sometimes those who backed them, however noble their vision, lose their shirts. But a system that values both trial-and-error and free choice is in no position to guarantee outcomes in advance. Furthermore, no one individual (and certainly no politburo or congressional committee or political party) can design rules that would treat each person according to his merit or even his need. No one has sufficient knowledge of all relevant personal details, and as Kant writes, no general rule has a grip fine enough to grasp them.

Hayek made a sharp distinction, however, between those failures of justice that involve breaking agreed-upon rules of fairness and those that consist in results that no one designed, foresaw, or commanded. The first sort of failure earned his severe moral condemnation. No one should break the rules; freedom imposes high moral responsibilities. The second, insofar as it springs from no willful or deliberate act, seemed to him not a moral matter but an inescapable feature of all societies and of nature itself. When labeling unfortunate results as "social injustices" leads to an attack upon the free society, with the aim of moving it toward a command society, Hayek strenuously opposes the term. The historical records of the command economies of Nazism and communism justify his revulsion at that way of thinking.

Hayek recognized that at the end of the nineteenth century, when the term "social justice" came to prominence, it was first used as an appeal to the ruling classes to attend to the needs of the new masses of uprooted peasants who had become urban workers. To this he had no objection. What he did object to was careless thinking. Careless thinkers forget that justice is by definition social. Such carelessness becomes positively destructive when the term "social" no longer describes the *product* of the virtuous actions of many individuals, but rather the *utopian goal* toward which all institutions and all individuals are "made in the utmost degree to converge" by coercion. In that case, the "social" in "social justice" refers to something that emerges not organically and spontaneously from the rule-abiding behavior of free individuals, but rather from an abstract ideal imposed from above.

Given the strength of Hayek's argument against the term, it may seem odd to assert that he himself was a practitioner of social justice—even if one adds, as one must, "social justice rightly understood." Still, Hayek plainly saw in his vocation as a thinker a life of service to his fellow men. Helping others to under-

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stand the intellectual keys to a free and creative society is to render them a great benefit. Hayek's intellectual work was not merely a matter of his own self-interest, narrowly understood, but was aimed at the good of the human city as a whole. It was a work of justice in a social dimension—in other words, a work of virtue. To explain what Hayek did, then, we need a conception of social justice that Hayek never considered.

Social justice rightly understood is a specific habit of justice that is "social" in two senses. First, the skills it requires are those of inspiring, working with, and organizing others to accomplish together a work of justice. These are the elementary skills of civil society, through which free citizens exercise self-government by doing for themselves (that is, without turning to government) what needs to be done. Citizens who take part commonly explain their efforts as attempts to "give back" for all that they have received from the free society, or to meet the obligations of free citizens to think and act for themselves. The fact that this activity is carried out *with others* is one reason for designating it as a specific type of justice; it requires a broader range of social skills than do acts of individual justice.

The second characteristic of "social justice rightly understood" is that it aims at the good of the city, not at the good of one agent only. Citizens may band together, as in pioneer days, to put up a school or build a bridge. They may get together in the modern city to hold a bake sale for some charitable cause, to repair a playground, to clean up the environment, or for a million other purposes that their social imaginations might lead them to. Hence the second sense in which this habit of justice is "social": its object, as well as its form, primarily involves the good of others.

One happy characteristic of this definition of the virtue of social justice is that it is ideologically neutral. It is as open to people on the left as on the right or in the center. Its field of activity may be literary, scientific, religious, political, economic, cultural, athletic, and so on, across the whole spectrum of human social activities. The virtue of social justice allows for people of good will to reach different—even opposing—practical judgments about the material content of the common good (ends) and how to get there (means). Such differences are the stuff of politics.

We must rule out any use of "social justice" that does not attach to the habits (that is, virtues) of individuals. Social justice is a virtue, an attribute of individuals, or it is a fraud. And if Tocqueville is right that "the principle of association is the first law of democracy," then social justice is the first virtue of democracy, for it is the habit of putting the principle of association into daily practice. Neglect of it, Hayek wrote, has moral consequences:

> It is one of the greatest weaknesses of our time that we lack the patience and faith to build up voluntary organizations for purposes which we value highly, and immediately ask the government to bring about by coercion (or with means raised by coercion) anything that appears as desirable to large numbers. Yet nothing can have a more deadening effect on real participation by the citizens than if government, instead of merely providing the essential framework of spontaneous growth, becomes monolithic and takes charge of the provision for all needs, which can be provided for only by the common effort of many.

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# Evangelicals in the Church of Mary

*Daniel P. Moloney*

"The Protestants were out at the pro-life ball," my Catholic friend told me, with some agitation. "They gave us all evangelical tracts." He was talking about a fundraising ball in Manhattan for a variety of pro-life groups. Although of the two young professional women who cochaired the event one was Roman Catholic and one evangelical Protestant, given the religious demographics of New York, most of the over three hundred people in attendance were Catholics, giving the impression that this was a "Catholic" event. That's why my friend was irritated at receiving an evangelical "tract" in a package handed out at the affair. When I reminded him that evangelicals are pro-life, too, and that distributing tracts is one way in which some people are accustomed to spreading the gospel of Christ, he upbraided me for not being more concerned. Aren't they spreading error? Isn't Protestantism heretical?

Earlier that same day I had received a call from a friend who works for a major evangelical parachurch organization. He wanted my advice on the best way for his organization to set up activities at a Catholic university with which I am somewhat familiar. We spoke

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for some time about the particular questions involved, but did not broach the larger question of whether I as a Catholic should help Protestants evangelize at a Catholic university in the first place.

That question did occur to me, but I decided that he had a right to pursue his ministry, and the handful of evangelicals at Catholic universities have a right to be ministered to. Although his organization is not interested in "sheep stealing," I could certainly foresee that some students who were baptized Catholic might decide to convert to evangelical Protestantism. I think such conversions could, at least in some instances, turn out to be a good thing. And I think John Paul II might agree with me.

Let me explain. All Christians agree that salvation involves a commitment to follow the call of Christ, a commitment that is renewed daily. Many Catholics and evangelicals fall short of this, of course, and in characteristic ways. Catholics tend to find comfort and security in their membership in the Church, as they should; they weave the sacraments and the liturgical seasons into the warp and woof of their lives, as they should; their faith becomes routine, as in regular, and appropriately so. But it can also become routine, as in routinized. Some seem to presume that not being excommunicated or in a state of mortal sin is the totality of the Christian life, as if the whole purpose of being Catholic were to avoid being thrown out of the Church. Cradle Catholics have the decision to follow Christ in the Catholic Church made for them by others while they are infants. Often, and I speak from experience, they do not later make that commitment their own and affirm it daily, as many of those who join the Church as adults do. We might call the resulting vice of merely routinized Christian living *spiritual sloth.*

Evangelicals, if I may be permitted, have almost the opposite spiritual vice. They tend to have had such a strong experience in their adult conversions that they make that experience the touchstone of their interior lives from then on. The experience has many aspects, but two in particular: the *decision* to accept and imitate Christ, on the one hand, and the *emotions* that accompany and confirm that decision, on the other. It seems that most evangelicals believe, and they are undoubtedly right in most cases, that the emotional part of conversion—the quickening of the heart, the ecstatic rush—is the felt experience of the action of the Holy Spirit.

The Christian spiritual tradition calls these the "consolations" that God sometimes sends us as a foretaste of the delights of heaven. Some evangelicals, apparently, find them so delightful that seeking consolations comes to constitute the center of their spiritual lives. This desire for heavenly delights in this life can lead us to identify the action of the Holy Spirit with powerful but merely human emotions (always a danger with a style of worship, whether Catholic or Protestant, that relies on generating spiritual enthusiasm). Looking for consolations can lead us to question the Holy Spirit when, because of psychological difficulties or other ways in which God may be testing our faith, consolations are lacking in our prayer and worship. An attachment to and hunger for emotional experiences that repeat the ecstatic moment of conversion—an attachment and hunger distinctive among evangelical Protestants—we might call *spiritual gluttony.*

It would be too easy to say that evangelicals and Catholics ought to get together because their characteristic spiritual vices complement each other. As a Catholic, I think that all Christians should accept Jesus as Lord and should each day make a conscious commitment to imitate Christ in their lives, tapping into the resources of truth and grace he entrusted to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church headed by Christ, shepherded by Peter and his successors up to and including John Paul II. Catholics ought to be filled with the energy and zeal that their evangelical brethren so often show. We must always be haunted by the words of Revelation regarding the fate of the lukewarm in the Church, whom the Lord says he will "vomit out" because they are neither hot nor cold (Revelation 3:16).

Likewise, I think evangelicals ought to accept the authoritative voice of the successors of Peter and the apostles not as an oppressive imposition but as Christ's gift and as an aid in evangelization. After all, Jesus asked Peter to take responsibility for feeding Christ's sheep. If at times Peter's successors have seemed less interested in feeding the sheep than in fleecing them, it should still be acknowledged that Jesus wanted the sheep to be fed by Peter, and he wanted the sheep to want Peter to feed them. Since both the pastor and his flock are guided by the Good Shepherd who is Jesus, the leading and the being led are both in obedience to Christ.

Catholics are sometimes prone to a partisan understanding of the Church's relation to non-Catholics. A person can become so caught up in defending the institution that he sees other committed Christians primarily as threats, rather than as brethren in Christ. This is decidedly not the ecumenical vision of the Second Vatican Council, which declares of non-Catholic Christians that "by his gifts and graces, the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit is also active in them" (*Lumen Gentium* 15). But it is common nonetheless.

The instinct to protect one's turf can too easily translate into a defensive attitude towards other Christians,

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a temptation of which John Paul II is acutely aware. In December 1987, at the beginning of a year that the Pope dedicated for special reflection on the importance of the Virgin Mary, Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I of Constantinople visited the Holy See. The Pope took advantage of his annual address to the curia to link the two events, the Marian year and the visit, in a speech still talked about thirteen years later.

Borrowing a metaphor from Hans Urs von Balthasar, the Pope spoke of two dimensions or "profiles," or, one might even go so far as to say, two Churches within the one Church that is the Body of Christ: the Church of Mary and the Church of Peter. The Church of Peter or the "Petrine profile" refers to the exercise of the authority of jurisdiction and office—the official concern of the bishops—while the Church of Mary or "Marian profile" consists of those who with Mary say "Yes" to God's call.

The Marian dimension is "supreme and preeminent," said the Pope, "richer in personal and communitarian implications" than the Petrine dimension. Pressing this image, the Pope insisted that the Petrine profile be thought of as in service to the Marian profile, that the chief purpose of office in the Roman Catholic Church is not to protect God's interests or those of the Church's institutions, but to minister to—that is, to aid and serve—all those who with the Mother of God respond faithfully and lovingly to the person of Jesus.

The "pilgrimage aspect of the Church," said the Pope, is prefigured in Mary, who accepted Jesus before he had founded his Church. It is when the Church looks to Mary's example as a pilgrim, the Pope believes, that its ecumenical possibilities are most manifest. It is also part of Catholic doctrine that all those who believe and are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit participate in the Body of Christ, whether or not they are in full communion with the Body of Christ as it subsists in the Catholic Church. Which means that all Christians, including Protestants, make up the Church of Mary, and ought to be served and supported by the Church of Peter.

While this way of putting it might make some evangelicals uncomfortable, others have already started using the resources this Pope has made accessible and attractive to the world. It is obvious that Charles Colson and Billy Graham pay more attention to the writings of the Holy Father and take them to heart more readily than do some dissenting Catholic priests and theologians. Pat Robertson for a time was sending copies of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as a gift to friends, while some Catholics view the *Catechism* as oppressive and authoritarian. It could even be argued that Campus Crusade and Prison Fellowship have done more to advance the Church of Mary than entire theology departments of some Catholic universities. These evangelical leaders recognize that Catholics and evangelicals share the same gospel, the same deposit of faith, and especially in recent decades, the same evangelical and apostolic imperative. Robert P. George refers to this reality as the "pan-orthodox alliance" (see "What Can We Reasonably Hope For?" FT, January 2000). The Pope seems to think that the papacy—being the "servant of the servants of God" in the words of Gregory the Great—can be viewed as ministry in service to this alliance.

Although the imagery is his own, the Pope is surely following the Second Vatican Council's teaching that the hierarchy is in the service of all believers. The constitution *Lumen Gentium,* in which the Council expressed the Church's self-understanding, looks outward to others from its opening line, "Christ is the light of the nations." The Council describes the Church as the People of Israel chosen by God, reconstituted in Christ, and sent out to the world, preaching the gospel in word and deed. Catholics and Protestants who have not read *Lumen Gentium* often do not realize how seriously it engages those important parts of the Christian tradition so vigorously asserted by the sixteenth-century Reformers, and therefore fail to realize how little support it supplies for the instinct to protect one's own turf, to be obsessed with "sheep stealing," or to define the Body of Christ polemically so as to exclude other Christians from the "gifts and graces [and] sanctifying power" that the Holy Spirit gives them.

While many evangelical churches are filled with former Catholics, these former Catholics will be the first to admit that as Catholics they were (for the most part) either nonpracticing or practicing but lukewarm. While they were sacramentally and juridically Catholic by their baptism, they did not live the baptismal grace that was theirs. If that latent grace is revivified, Catholics should rejoice, even if it happens outside full communion with the Catholic Church. Many of these former Catholics left the Church of Peter but are not lost to the Church of Mary, the dimension of the Church which Christ intends the Church of Peter to serve.

Although Catholics are rightly disappointed when people feel they have to leave the Catholic Church to find a living faith in Jesus, we should not be angry with them. We must rather ask about the stumbling blocks that other Catholics had placed in their spiritual path. *Lumen Gentium* speaks quite starkly of those who fail to live according to the grace they receive: "Even though incorporated into the Church, *one who does not persevere in charity is not saved.* He remains indeed in the bosom of the Church, but 'in body' not 'in heart'" (no. 14, emphasis added). Catholics should give thanks if char-

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ity returns to their hearts, even if it is through the evangelism of non-Catholics.

So when I encourage my evangelical brethren to extend their ministries among Catholics, I hope to be adding to the number of people who say "Yes" to God. I do hope they say it also to Christ's Body the Church in all the dimensions Christ intended for his Church; but, above all, I hope that they say it. Many evangelicals are good Christians, many Catholics are bad Christians, and if some bad Christians become better Christians through the influence of evangelical Protestants, *Deo gratias.* If I pray that there be more workers for the harvest, I shouldn't mind when they show up, even if they are not exactly what I expected. And, as the animosities between Catholics and evangelicals subside, as Catholics and Protestants come to realize that they are already in communion, however imperfectly, I am confident that many Christians who live in the Marian dimension of the Church will continue to discover the fulness that the Holy Spirit bestows in the ministry of Peter, who is called by the Good Shepherd to feed all the sheep.

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## Baptism

Water from you
will quickly fill
my deserted soul,
which withers, until
it meets with my eyes
and, reaching their rim,
gives ocular proof
of a tropic within.

**Patrick Lee Miller**

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# That Lousy War: Explaining Vietnam

*Adam Garfinkle*

**Argument Without End: In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy.** By Robert S. McNamara, with James Blight, Robert Brigham, Thomas Biersteker, and Col. Herbert Schandler. *Public Affairs. 419 pp. $27.50.*

**Vietnam: The Necessary War: A Reinterpretation of America's Most Disastrous Military Conflict.** By Michael Lind. *Free Press. 284 pp. $25.*

**Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of the Vietnam War.** By Fredrik Logevall. *University of California Press. 413 pp. $35.*

**Peace Now! American Society and the Ending of the Vietnam War.** By Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones. *Yale University Press. 228 pp. $25.*

There are too many new books on the Vietnam War. Too many, because that war is no longer particularly relevant to the American, Asian, or global political context. It may be true that future U.S. wars will resemble Vietnam more than World War II; politically ambiguous conflicts with limited military parameters will be more frequent than large, set-piece winner-take-all conventional warfare. But it would be wrong to exaggerate the degree of useful similarity between the Vietnam War and the American conflicts of the future. From both a geostrategic and an ideological perspective, Vietnam is indecipherable except in terms of Cold War conditions and concerns. American policy was conceived against the backdrop of a global totalitarian threat, in an age when the massive use of U.S. nuclear weapons in anger was a real possibility. Standing behind North Vietnam was Soviet and Chinese power, and the implications of victory or defeat for all the great powers involved were universally understood to transcend local and regional stakes.

However difficult the contemporary problems of American policy in the Balkans, the Caribbean basin, or Southwest Asia, none bears such a context. U.S. credibility and reputation in one area or policy episode does still affect it in others, but the fit is looser than in Cold War times. Most important, no other single power or coalition has both the capacity and the will to exploit U.S. errors and weaknesses as the Soviet Union once did. The military technology of the on-rushing future, too, is so different from that of the Vietnam era that it is hard even to learn much from the tactical experience of that war.

If the subject has become less relevant to practical concerns, why, then, so many new books, of which the four discussed here represent a semi-random sampling of the recent production? Three reasons stand out.

The first is that the American generation for whom the Vietnam War was *the* seminal intellectual and political experience has now reached intellectual maturity; namely, about fifty years of age or thereabouts. People write about themselves and what they know, or think they know, from direct experience—as well they should. One of the books reviewed here, *Peace Now!* by Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, fits into that category.

The second is that the generation that fought the war is aging, and we thus have new memoirs and pseudo-memoirs about it. Robert McNamara's *Argument Without End* is a particularly exotic—and neurotic—example of that genre.

The third is that younger scholars suppose that they can bring a "post-emotional" analysis to the subject. Perhaps so. That we are beyond the Cold War, and

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know how it ended, allows a certain closure on the broader subject at hand. More than that, hitherto inaccessible archives are being made available to scholars. Fredrik Logevall (born 1963) and Michael Lind (born 1962) both fit into this younger generation of writers on Vietnam.

Of course, there are broader reasons for the sustained interest in the Vietnam War, reasons less practical than philosophical. The "long 1960s," as it is often called, witnessed a major cultural shift in the United States, and there is not a major social statistic that does not bear witness to it—whether on family life, race relations, consumer behavior, or political dynamics. It stands to reason that the war had something to do with this shift, if not as cause then as catalyst, shaper, or accelerator.

More important, we still disagree about the war itself. If we had reached consensus on three key issues—Was the Indochina problem worth the level of U.S. effort devoted to it? Was the early problem of Indochina ever solvable, or the later war ever winnable? If so, why was the problem not solved, or the consequent war not won?—there would not be nearly so much interest in the war within any generational cohort. We are still arguing over whether the Vietnam War, in its essence, was a civil or an international war. But as far as American politics was and remains concerned, it *is* a civil war, seen by the light of our continuing disagreement about it.

In addition to addressing historical matters, most interpretations of the war are at least implicitly forward-looking, their aim being to tell us what sort of people we are and, by implication, where we should be heading and how we ought to get there. As we overwrite our history we prejudice our future. This is why, if have new books we must, we need book reviews, even long ones, to oversee this overwriting. We all have a stake in how the putative last draft reads.

Robert Strange McNamara is a strange man. He is a perpetual convolution machine and the reason is plain. I am certain that Mr. McNamara has never harbored a single evil or malicious intention, and yet the consequences of his "public" acts (Vietnam, his years at the World Bank, his becoming a nuclear dove at precisely the wrong moment of the Cold War) have ranged from unfortunate to evil with a consistency that almost beggars belief. An intelligent and impressive man, McNamara cannot have been oblivious to this pattern, but his manner of dealing with it over the years is something passing strange to behold.

*Argument Without End* is a book so deeply flawed in its very essence that it is literally painful to read. It got me in the stomach. I also confess to a loathing for its primary author, an emotion that I will indulge in a moment. But it is nonetheless an important book—first, for its information. Between 1995 and 1998, McNamara and a team of like-minded American scholars and officials traveled to Hanoi for seminars with their Vietnamese counterparts to discuss what both sides were thinking at each stage of the developing conflict. These seminars provided matter for the reflections of McNamara and his coauthors. While the reader can trust neither the authors' interpretation of the Vietnamese-American discussion nor McNamara's historical memory, the book is valuable for the insight it provides into the thinking of North Vietnam's wartime leadership. Second, thanks to McNamara's coauthors, who wrote most of the text, the book represents as close to an official version of a certain interpretation of the war as we are likely to have for some time. That version is the incarnation of the liberal antiwar view that saw the war not as a crime but as a strategic misjudgment so huge that it doomed the United States to fight an unwinnable and multi-destructive war. At least within the academy, this is the hegemonic view. It is the view that posterity will inherit unless it is debunked, and it is valuable to have it laid out with reasonable dispassion and completeness in one place.

McNamara's main aim in *Argument Without End* is to glean the mutual "missed opportunities" that led to the American phase of the war in Vietnam, and to examine those missed opportunities to distill general lessons about the future conduct of U.S. policy. McNamara believes it is possible to learn from history, but what he has "learned" from his several seminars with the Vietnamese Communist leadership shows how tricky a business this is.

For the reader, the difficulty is compounded by the unreliability of McNamara's memories about his own views. After all, he is both author and subject here, interviewing others and dissecting his former self at the same time. But some of this interrogation just does not make sense. From the day he set foot in the Pentagon as Secretary of Defense, he tells us in *Argument Without End*, he believed that U.S. nuclear weapons should never be used anytime, anywhere, for any purpose. So, he says, he told the President. If that is so, and not a memory edited for purposes of latter-day conscience-salving, then why did McNamara preside so vigorously over the most extensive quantitative buildup of U.S. strategic nuclear forces in history? Equally implausible is his plaint that in 1961-65 he was foolishly ignorant of the polycentric tendencies in the Communist movement. As Michael Morris has pointed out, that admission, also made in McNamara's 1995 book *In Retrospect*, is contradicted by a 1964 speech in which McNamara shows a clear understanding of the complex political relationships among Vietnam, China, and the Soviet Union.

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The odd thing about McNamara's retrospective confessions is that they amount to a falsification of the historical record not to justify his own past but to condemn it. Not only are such convolutions peculiar, they are misleading; McNamara is wrong about why he was wrong.

What McNamara got wrong at the time was the nature of the war the Communist side was fighting. He never understood it, and, as a result, he failed to scrutinize the advice tendered to him and to the President by the uniformed military to see if it would produce an effective strategy. There was no easy way to prevail in Vietnam at any stage of the conflict, but preventing the unification of the country under Communist rule by conventional force of arms in 1975 was possible.

As others have argued, the U.S. search-and-destroy attrition strategy was not only unavailing in Vietnam but downright counterproductive. It had the effect of turning the National Liberation Front (NLF) from a small, bedraggled minority force before 1964 into a formidable politico-military movement by mid-1967. American tactics politicized a peasantry that, like most peasantries, preferred to be left alone. They undermined the nationalist credentials of the government in Saigon and played into the hands of those who argued that American motives in Indochina were no different from those of the French. They infantilized the entire South Vietnamese government, pushing it toward a level of corruption and venality it had never known under President Ngo Dinh Diem, who was overthrown in 1963. At the same time, the policy of graduated response, which used American air power to retaliate measure for measure against Vietnamese aggression, was unavailing, because U.S. decision makers underestimated the pain threshold that the North Vietnamese government was willing to inflict on its people. In short, what was a remediable if not easily winnable situation in 1961 was turned into an increasingly unwinnable war by 1967-68, not *despite* American efforts but *because* of them. As Secretary of Defense, McNamara bore much of the responsibility for allowing such a thing to happen. And judging from *Argument Without End*, he still doesn't get it.

That is not all he does not get. *Argument Without End* endorses the view that the United States erred by not aiding Ho Chi Minh in 1946 against French imperialism. It endorses the view that the American attitude toward the 1954 Geneva Conference was a mistake, and that President Diem was more likely to reconcile with the North than to allow an Americanization of the war. It also endorses the view that South Vietnam's internal security policy hardened *before* the campaign of Communist assassination and intimidation, a campaign directed from the North and carried out largely by the minority of southerners who had gone north after the division of the country. More to the point of his own culpability, McNamara endorses the view that a Communist victory in Vietnam would not have crippled U.S. Cold War policy worldwide, and that even such an outcome could have been prevented for at least ten years through the vehicle of a neutralist coalition government in Saigon.

None of this is true; McNamara had all of this essentially correct while in office. The only way to believe what he now believes is to assume that there was a basic symmetry in aims between the United States and North Vietnam; in other words, to believe that both wanted to prevent war and were prepared to make significant political concessions to do so. But there was no symmetry. The United States was defending the status quo, which included a non-Communist government in South Vietnam. The North Vietnamese, the NLF, and their Chinese and Soviet allies were determined to extinguish that country and annex it to the North under Communist domination. There is therefore no reason to credit statements by Vietnamese Communists that they would have tolerated a neutralist government in Saigon for year after year—unless, of course, *they were forced to do so* by an unfavorable balance of power. But any neutralist arrangement mandating the withdrawal of U.S. military forces would have been rolled up by Hanoi in short order, just as the Paris Peace Accords were violated massively as soon as it became possible to do so successfully. It is sad to imagine McNamara in Hanoi, straining to get his Vietnamese interlocutors to say the things he wanted so dearly to hear, to provide him company in his contrition all these years later. And so, perhaps hoping to use McNamara's influence against the late 1990s U.S. embargo against Vietnam, they said them—a few of them, anyway.

McNamara never could quite get the Vietnamese to admit that they, too, missed opportunities. They did admit some miscalculations. They admitted that they had tried to win quickly in the South after Diem's fall in 1963-64 before the United States could stop them, and failed. They admitted, after a fashion, that they would have preferred not to have lost so many people. But the only "missed opportunities" the Vietnamese were prepared to admit were those that foiled their attempts to win the war sooner and at lower cost. They *never* accepted McNamara's view that the war was a joint tragedy. As far as the Vietnamese were concerned, it was a tragedy for the United States because the United States lost. They won; so where's the tragedy? Their dead are all martyrs; American dead died in vain because the United States lost the war.

Now, this is a rather old-fashioned way of looking at things, perhaps, but the Vietnamese were, and remain,

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rather old-fashioned. McNamara cannot accept this at face value, because without the assumption of symmetrical missed opportunities and mutual tragedy, his interpretation of his own mistakes makes no sense. This also explains, very likely, why it never occurred to McNamara to seek out the *South* Vietnamese side. There are still secrets, and perhaps even a missed opportunity or two, to be found there, but those secrets fall outside the script of McNamara's private passion play.

What is one to make of all this? Robert McNamara's pattern is clear: he is an infinite regress of error. He errs; he admits error after the fact but mistakes what his error was; this leads him to new error; he recognizes and apologizes again but also mistakes the essence of that error; and so on and on and, with this book, on again. In the case of Vietnam, McNamara has become so intent on pursuing a particular logic of contrition that the falsification of his own earlier views replicates the twisted logic of a Stalinist show trial, where devout Bolsheviks deranged by the ideological disease of Marxism-Leninism confessed crimes they never committed. In McNamara's case, however, there is no Stalin, there is no ideological disease (unless it is unreconstructed antiwar movement liberalism), and McNamara is prosecutor and victim rolled into one.

Perhaps a different metaphor is better suited to explain McNamara's strange ways. Pope Urban II blessed the First Crusades as a penitential war, meaning that through war it was possible for individual crusaders to atone for their sins. McNamara seems to be seeking penance by making war against war, by arguing, Woodrow Wilson-like, against power politics and urging the United States to put its trust in the United Nations. "I believe," he writes, "that the United Nations charter offers a far more appropriate framework for international relations in the future than does the doctrine of power politics." This isn't even originally wrong. It therefore isn't worthy of Mr. McNamara.

As painful as it is to read *Argument Without End*, it is as frustrating to read *Choosing War*. Fredrik Logevall, a Swedish national, gives us a history of the Vietnam War as an object lesson in how to produce grand tragedy. It is a good history, but one that nevertheless reaches dubious, and even hapless, conclusions.

Logevall argues that, contrary to received wisdom, there was little risk that an American failure to engage in Vietnam would have jeopardized America's overall Cold War strategy. He argues further that Lyndon Johnson was worried more about his personal power, and his Administration about the credibility of the Democratic Party, than they were about geopolitics. He also argues that the considerable opposition to escalation failed to organize itself effectively to press its case. Overall, Logevall contends that American policy was extraordinarily rigid. He shows how U.S. leaders rejected diplomatic means of damage limitation even though they knew that military resistance to North Vietnamese strategy would likely be difficult to sustain at a cost the American people would be willing to bear. He seems to suggest that wiser people would have chosen differently, and that their absence made the difference between prudence and tragedy.

Such a view does indeed run against the grain of much post hoc analysis of the war. Ernest May argued that "given the assumptions generally shared by Americans in the 1960s, it seems probable that any collection of men or women would have decided as did members of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations." In *The Irony of Vietnam* (1979), Leslie Gelb and Richard Betts showed that the decision process worked well: options were considered, dissenting opinions were aired, and agency views were well coordinated. Others have argued more broadly that had American leaders not made decisions that ran the American ship of state aground in Vietnam, they would soon enough have run it aground somewhere else owing to an undifferentiated, ideologically driven expansion of the Containment doctrine.

Logevall's case is well-documented and well-argued, and nearly all of what he writes is literally correct. But he builds the evidence into conclusions that are mostly wrong; alas, scholarly honesty and diligence are no guarantee of real success. It is clear that Logevall had a thesis already in mind as he was reading and analyzing the documents, a condition that has led many a scholar to unwittingly procrustean results. He is wrong, for example, to argue that Johnson pursued an urge to escalate despite the harm these foreign policies did to his domestic policy aims. In truth, Johnson would have had a harder time prevailing domestically had he *not* been a hawk on Vietnam. He needed the Southern Democrats to sustain the Great Society at the margins, and he would have riled their Jacksonian souls by withdrawing from Vietnam.

More than that, while President Johnson was a political animal concerned about the impact of his decisions on his own power, he was concerned about it for less parochial reasons than Logevall suggests. Where does one draw the line between preserving power for personal reasons and preserving power for higher aims? Was Johnson wrong to believe that his national popularity as a liberal southerner might well be the difference in keeping avowed segregationists out of political power in the United States in the mid-1960s? Or that he might be the difference in keeping someone out of the White House who might have blundered into a nuclear war over Indochina? All public figures present an insoluble problem in this regard, because it is impossible to climb into their heads to parse their

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motives. (This is true even in the case of Bill Clinton, a man whose political avariciousness at the expense of the national interest is an extreme example.)

Logevall also argues, along with those of the McNamara school, that a neutralizing coalition-government solution to the problems in South Vietnam was available to the United States. He contends, moreover, that had the United States availed itself of such a solution, U.S.-Soviet relations would have improved markedly and more quickly than they eventually did. This is certainly wrong. The sure collapse of South Vietnam under such a scheme would have created a sharp political backlash in the United States and it would have filled the sails of both Soviet and Chinese imperialism. Great power relations would have worsened, not improved.

The larger problem in *Choosing War* is that Logevall places less emphasis, and sometimes does not mention at all, the crucial mistakes that *were* made by American decision makers. Most of these mistakes were at the tactical level, both militarily and managerially, in South Vietnam. They were numerous and they were deadly. The decision to act to prevent the fall of South Vietnam, however, was *not* a mistake. Perhaps, as McNamara and Logevell suggest, that decision *could* have been different. Judged by the light of that day, however, it *shouldn't* have been different.

Besides, what would it mean if Logevall were right about the American mistakes of the "long 1964"? Logevall makes a reasonable case that, *pace* May, Gelb and Betts, et al., escalation in Vietnam in 1964 was not for all purposes inevitable. But then how to explain why it happened anyway? If one would predict the past, the safe thing to do is to call it like it was, not like it might have been. Logevall takes the harder course and he plays it about as well as possible, but where does that leave us? What is the status of a successful counterfactual argument? After all, what mattered at the time was not what was "objectively" so—as determined by an exhaustive rendering of foreign views of American credibility and half a dozen speculative pseudo-psychiatric glosses on Lyndon Johnson's character. What mattered was how things looked *to Lyndon Johnson.* Though he never actually comes right out and says it, Logevall leaves us with the conclusion that someone other than Lyndon Johnson, someone wiser or endowed with different personality traits, should have been President. Maybe so; but thirty-six years after the 1964 election, how useful, really, is it to know *that*?

Here, of course, we enter the realm of philosophy, and even theology. Do the things that happen have to happen? Is this both the best and only of all possible worlds, or not? To what extent is human history contingent and to what extent is it necessary—and how are we to know which parts are which? Such questions make God laugh; they make us uncomfortable.

Michael Lind takes the safer route. By calling Vietnam the "necessary" war, Lind aligns himself with those who contend that the decision to go to war was at least determined "enough." But Lind goes further: he argues that it was the right thing to have done, and that it might have turned out pretty well had Robert McNamara, William Westmoreland, and a few choice others not screwed things up.

Of course, this is swampy terrain. Can it be argued that the onset of escalation and war could *not* have been otherwise, and yet argue that the prosecution of the war *could* have been otherwise? Can the decision to make war be correct, given what we knew at the time, while the decisions involved in prosecuting it be so clearly incorrect? Can one counterfactual speculation be inadmissible, but another allowed? If avoiding the war was impossible because it wasn't avoided, then how could losing the war have been avoided since it was, in fact, lost?

This is a problem, and not only for Michael Lind and those, like me, who believe that the prosecution of the war could indeed have been otherwise. One can turn this around. Those who say the war was unwinnable but avoidable—like McNamara, for example—have precisely the same problem, only the terms are reversed. They would have the decision to fight the war be contingent, but the fate of subsequently losing it be necessary. One version of the dilemma has Johnson acting as he must but Westmoreland acting as he shouldn't, the other version having Johnson acting as he shouldn't but Westmoreland acting as he must. What is the solution to this problem? It will come clearer once we have limned Mr. Lind's fine if flawed book.

Lind begins his argument by placing the Vietnam War precisely where it belongs: in the context of the Cold War. His essential argument is that the United States was right to fight in Vietnam to defend its credibility as a superpower, but it was necessary for the United States to forfeit the war after 1968 in order to preserve the American Cold War consensus in favor of prosecuting that larger struggle on other fronts. "Indochina was worth a war," writes Lind, "but only a limited war—and not the limited war that the United States actually fought."

This view leads Lind to find at least two major culprits in American policy: those whose decisions with respect to the war's prosecution were so wrongheaded; and the Nixon Administration, which failed to cut American losses quickly and doomed the country to four more years of war in search of a futile "peace with honor." Nixon, says Lind, turned a regional retreat into a global defeat.

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Perhaps only the Cold War's end allows any writer to take its full measure. If so, Lind's cup is overflowing. He deftly characterizes the nature of the Cold War as a combination of siege and duel. The superpowers, contending in what amounted strategically to World War III, laid siege to one another in areas of core importance—mainly Europe. In those areas they became "frozen in a stalemate that could not be broken without the risk of general war." Peripheral areas of dueling, mainly in Asia and especially in Indochina, were important because they could be contested without such risks. Thus, "Indochina was strategic *because* it was peripheral."

By giving pride of place to the larger context, the waging and winning of the Cold War, Lind is able to make sense of particular approaches to the Vietnam War. One of his most contentious arguments is that, by 1968, the cost of winning in Vietnam—or of merely not losing—had grown so high, thanks to antecedent American tactical errors, that to pursue it risked support for Cold War policy generally. Lind cites Senator Henry M. Jackson, a Democratic hawk on Vietnam, as being one of the few who understood the point, and praises Jackson's wisdom in counseling quick disengagement. "His nuanced understanding of the issues at stake is shown by the fact that he voted for the Cooper-Church Amendment, which prohibited the widening of the war, and yet opposed the McGovern-Hatfield Amendment, which would have reduced U.S. leverage in negotiations by imposing an artificial deadline for U.S. withdrawal." Exactly right.

By insisting on that context, moreover, Lind argues that the real choices before the United States in Vietnam all along were not win or lose, but win well, win badly, lose well, or lose badly. In contests of great power, Lind insists, it is often better to be defeated than to surrender without a fight, better even to lose well than to win badly.

This is Lind's core realist argument, and it is a persuasive one. The book itself, however, deviates widely from it. Lind is at pains to show that the decision to fight was the right one, and this leads him on his own long war, with many side battles, to show that every single "myth" purveyed by the antiwar movement was wrong.

- Ho Chi Minh was not a Vietnamese nationalist whose Marxism was a veneer. "There *was* an international Communist conspiracy," writes Lind, "and Ho Chi Minh was a charter member of it." Moreover, Ho was not the only legitimate nationalist leader in Vietnam in the 1940s, and Lind shows how Ho and his subordinates found it necessary to execute, assassinate, imprison, and exile non-Communist nationalists and dissidents in both North and South Vietnam in order to assure Ho's dictatorial perch.

- Neither was Ho a Southeast Asian Tito. There was never a chance that a Communist Vietnam would be Communist but anti-Soviet in geopolitical terms. There were, Lind points out, pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese factions in the Vietnamese Communist Party, but never anything remotely like a pro-Western one. Thus, *pace* McNamara, the United States "missed no opportunities in 1945 or 1950 or 1954 or 1956."

- South Vietnam did not violate international law by refusing to participate in the 1956 elections called for in Geneva in 1954; neither South Vietnam nor the United States were signatories of the 1954 accords, and for good reason.

- Again, the overthrow of Diem in 1963 did not abort reconciliation between North and South Vietnam.

- The National Liberation Front was never a spontaneous South Vietnamese movement; it was created and manipulated from Hanoi from start to finish.

- The Vietnamese Communists were never serious about a stable, neutralist coalition government except as a transition first to Communist rule and then to unification under Hanoi's total control.

- John Kennedy was not about to abandon South Vietnam; had he lived, there is no good reason to think that the basic impulses of U.S. policy would have been different (although Kennedy's conduct of the war might have been shrewder).

- South Vietnam did not fall because it was venal and corrupt; it fell because the United States abandoned it to a regime that was at least as corrupt and far more brutal. Lind details the mass murder by the North Vietnamese regime of its internal "class enemies," when between 1953 and 1956 it exterminated as many as 100,000 wealthy peasants and professionals during a spasm of "land reform."

- The domino theory, seen more broadly, was not false. "As it happened," writes Lind, "the fall

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of only three regional dominos in Indochina did trigger a worldwide revolutionary wave and an even more dangerous trend of pro-Soviet bandwagoning in world politics."

• Finally, on the antiwar movement itself—speaking about the summer of 1967 but with a broader implication—Lind contends that it was a movement "led by radicals and pacifists" that "had failed to convince the American public that the war was immoral; indeed, the anti-American rhetoric of many antiwar activists was creating a backlash from which conservative politicians would profit for decades."

Along his way, Lind seeks the demolition of one liberal icon after another: Frances Fitzgerald and Barbara Tuchman, Seymour Hersh and David Halberstam, Todd Gitlin and Gareth Porter, Harrison Salisbury and Marilyn Young, Richard Rorty and Robert Dallek, among many. All of them are displayed at their tendentious, misinformed worst, hoisted high on the petards of their own words. If one is already inclined to Lind's point of view, this is delicious, for it is so rare that anyone's mistakes are ever recalled, let alone called to account. Lind is well-suited to the task, for he knows how to form words into fists, and land them square on target. If one is not so inclined, an uncomfortable time should be anticipated.

Lind saves a knockout punch for none other than Robert Kennedy, whom he accuses, essentially, of treason. Citing Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali's archival research, Lind tells us that RFK created an unauthorized back channel to the Soviet government in 1963-64, when he was still Attorney General. Through that channel he denigrated President Johnson and "encouraged the Soviet elite to patiently await the more sympathetic policy of a second President Kennedy."

For all the book's merits, there are some problems. On several points it is overly simple and on some others a tad stretched. There are a few factual errors. It seems almost randomly sourced. There is some awkward repetition. It features two curious digressions, and it is less scholarly in the true sense than a polemic with scholarly equipage. One of Lind's digressions is in chapter four (of his eight chapters): "The Fall of Washington: The Domestic Politics of the Vietnam War." It is, over all, an insightful account of how the postwar constituencies of the Democratic and Republican parties switched sides during the Vietnam era. But the tale bears a theoretical underpinning based on a theory of U.S. ethnic regionalism. Following the historian David Hackett Fischer, among others, Lind argues that four "hearth" cultures have dominated American history. Liberal, nearly pacifist Greater New England and the bellicist Tidewater South are the two most important, while the populists of the Highland South and the Quaker-influenced mid-Atlantic stock make up the other two.

To explain American domestic politics over the Vietnam War, however, Lind feels he has to reinterpret every war in the American history according to the compass of hearth-culture regionalism. This takes many pages, and if one is less interested in grand theories of American political sociology than in the subject at hand—Vietnam—this is a wearying chapter. If one has a bit more patience and imagination, there is much that is edifying here. Lind perhaps takes the case farther than he should, but his is an exercise that repays the reader's close attention.

Lind's second digression is an excursion into moral philosophy (in the chapter "Was the Vietnam War Unjust?") that ought to have ended up on the cutting room floor. Not that the subject is unimportant; to the contrary, it is so important that it deserves more careful treatment. Lind starts out well enough, arguing that moral realism is the only acceptable way to explain how international politics both is and ought to be conducted. But he argues that the theory of moral realism is "relatively undeveloped," and this is not so. Nowhere in this chapter do we hear about or from Reinhold Niebuhr or John Courtney Murray, not to speak of Aquinas, Hugo Grotius, or a host of non-Western sources who long ago came to similar conclusions. Instead, having introduced the essential questions, Lind skips to a potpourri of topics—the morality of proxy wars, the war as an intervention or an invasion, the morality of supporting dictatorships, the questions of corruption, repression, and national legitimacy—most of which have to do more with semantics than moral philosophy.

Also, Lind's views are not as rare as he makes out. He introduces *Vietnam: The Necessary War* by claiming to have published a unique perspective, one created by the destruction of pre-Vietnam-era Democratic strategic realism, or, as Lind calls it, liberal anticommunism. Some liberal anti-Communists, he says, fled left, ingratiating themselves with the antiwar movement and absorbing its guilt-assuaging views. The rest moved right, joining forces with anti-Soviet conservatives, jettisoning their liberal views on domestic politics in the process. Only Lind, we are to presume, is left standing.

This isn't quite so. (I made many of the same arguments in my book back in 1995.) While some reviewers have been hostile to Lind, most have not, and the fact that the book has been as cordially received as it has shows two things: first, that Lind has had intellectual company all along; second, that time is mellowing the divisions of the Vietnam era. That is good.

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So while Lind hath done valiantly, he hath also done quirkily. But there is one fact about Lind that, on reflection, may tie the quirks together. Lind is a high-country Democrat from Texas, a populist southerner in the mold of none other than Lyndon Johnson. If one likes, one can see his defense of liberal anticommunism in general and Lyndon Johnson in particular, his barely veiled loathing for Kennedys and Greater New England pacifism, and even his talent for polemic, as all reflecting this personal vector. Had the Republic of Texas survived as an independent state, *Vietnam: The Necessary War* might have been its official history of that war. Think about it: the battle for the Alamo ended badly, but Texans take pride in that, too.

Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, a British veteran of the antiwar movement, does not agree with Mr. Lind. Nor, to him, are Messrs. McNamara and Logevall critical enough of the war. Jeffreys-Jones is not reluctant, for example, to call the war "racist." His thesis in *Peace Now!* is that American society effectively rose up and stopped U.S. participation in the Vietnam War, and that it did so in phases or pulses in which certain segments of society took the leading role. First came students, then African Americans, then women, and then organized labor: "The argument in this book is that the effectiveness of the revolt sprang in large measure from its serial nature. . . . I present the antiwar movement as a cumulative, repetitive series of protests." Each of the four groups, he argues, "reached a distinctive crescendo at an unpredictable moment," the result being that politicians had "no respite" and could find "no enduring formula to apply in suppressing all forms of protest."

Jeffreys-Jones acknowledges that all four of these groups initially supported the war; thus, "If the people won, they won slowly." This leads the author to show his own bias: "To imbue the American people indiscriminately with heroic and effective pacifism would be dewy-eyed." (That's not all it would be.) But why did all four of these groups support the war at first, only to oppose it later? Jeffreys-Jones thinks the answer lies in four factors: considerations of "economic interests, immersion in local politics, . . . involvement in the Democratic coalition," and the "'minority' status, real or imagined, of the chosen groups." He emphasizes this last point, arguing that groups with social power deficits wanted, not to put too fine a point on it, to suck up to the establishment. In short, they wished to trade support for its foreign policy to secure access to power and social status.

Jeffreys-Jones is right to insist that the influence of American society on the course of U.S. participation in Vietnam cannot be understood apart from the main patterns of American politics. But by far the main reason that attitudes toward the war changed over time had to do with what was happening *in Southeast Asia.* The war went badly; American casualties mounted even as the prospect of achieving U.S. war aims dimmed; and the U.S. leadership vacillated and reversed course as a result. As John Mueller argued years ago, the data show that the American people followed their leaders into war, and then followed them back out when those leaders changed their minds. Jeffreys-Jones barely mentions the war, and never discusses the impact of mounting casualties on opinion shifts. His approach to the subject is therefore as analytically derelict as an approach to applied physics that considers everything except gravity.

Large as it is, that is not the only problem with *Peace Now!* The thesis itself smacks of academentia: it is far too parsimonious and artificial to have much to do with reality. The antiwar movement was not separable into phases, nor discrete groups of participants. Some students were female and some were black. Some blacks and women were in the labor movement. Some within all these groups were liberals, some were left-liberals, and some were radicals. The impact of student protest on American opinion did not fall off after 1965 as Jeffreys-Jones contends, nor that of women rise only in 1967-68. It is all much too neat, and the effort to force the dynamics of American society into these four little boxes leads to all sorts of pseudo-analytic contortions. Indeed, it leads Jeffreys-Jones to downright silly statements as he tries to show how the economic interests of various groups changed in such a way as to turn them from prowar to antiwar.

This is what happens when a Marxist frame of mind is superimposed on the normal complexity of social reality. It is also what happens when the contemporary framework of academic political correctness—replete with programs of black studies, women's studies, labor studies, and special efforts, it seems, at engendering student narcissism—is thrust backwards onto history as an organizing principle.

In truth, ideas and organizations mattered a lot more in the antiwar movement than PC identities. The common self-identification of antiwar movement leaders was not "students" or "women" or "proletariat" but rather "liberal" or "pacifist" or "radical." Yet Jeffreys-Jones has little to say about the adversary-culture origins of most of the prime movers of the antiwar movement, and virtually nothing to say about their various organizational capacities. He mentions in passing, for example, that the Socialist Workers Party was anti-Stalinist without ever telling the reader that it was Trotskyite! At a certain point Jeffreys-Jones notes the fact that Students for a Democratic Society was antiliberal as though it were some sort of revelation, when it is the ur-observation of all serious analyses of the subject.

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So where does this leave us? There are good, useful, mediocre, and bad books being written about the Vietnam War, this we know. But what stands out from the more serious efforts within the new literature is its revisionist intentions. All of these authors, and others besides, are trying to persuade us that what we thought was so is not so. And they are not trying to persuade us just for the sake of it; they do not subscribe to A. J. P. Taylor's attitude toward the writing of history, that it is "an art just like painting or architecture and is designed like them only to give intellectual and artistic pleasure."

On the contrary, they all believe it could have been otherwise, and they all believe that seeing how it *should* have been otherwise can influence future decisions. McNamara believes that we can learn not only particular lessons about our mistakes, but very general ones, such as forsaking realism for the UN charter. Logevall believes that egoism and rigidity go hand in hand in bad decision-making, and hopes that new elites take the personality-wrought tragedies of the past to heart. Jeffreys-Jones believes that "people power" works, that it is good, and that we need more of it. Lind believes that understanding what went wrong in Vietnam is necessary to avoid repeating those mistakes in places like the Balkans, which Lind sees as being more similar to Vietnam than not, and which he views as the model for most future U.S. politico-military engagements.

Thus we are returned to the problem of the counterfactual, and to the meaning and potential uses of history that are so much the subject of analysis, aphorism, and misquotation. Is reading history, particularly the history of sorrowful times in which we have vested memories, like a Greek tragedy, a story that has to end tragically because that is what tragedies do? Is it so chilling to learn the details and the inner logic of such times precisely because one is helpless to change them? Or can such study steel us to do better, to redeem what has been done by exercising those choices we do have?

Many great minds have wrestled with this problem. Spinoza, among others, understood that a world without free will is a world in which moral action is a farce. But Machiavelli in *The Prince* saw that the tides and patterns of human affairs are not easily turned. In his discussion of *Fortuna*, which he likens to a woman, Machiavelli tells us that

> it may be true that Fortune is the ruler of half our actions, but . . . she allows the other half or thereabouts to be governed by us. I would compare her to an impetuous river that, when turbulent, inundates the plains, casts down trees and buildings, removes earth from this side and places it on the other; . . . and yet though it is of such a kind, still when it is quiet, men can make provision against it by dikes and banks, so that when it rises it will either go into a canal or its rush will not be so wild and dangerous. So it is with Fortune, which always shows her power where no measures have been taken to resist her.

One can resist the forces of history, then, through planning, and Machiavelli also counsels that one can benefit from such forces by aligning oneself with their general direction. Like Talleyrand, who defined diplomacy as the art of foreseeing the inevitable and expediting its occurrence in a manner beneficial to oneself, Machiavelli saw the possibility of contingency in history residing in wise leaders who take the proper measure of their own limits.

That sounds about right: leaders have real choices but only within certain boundaries. It takes wise leaders to understand those boundaries, and truly great ones who, by their own exertions, can broaden them. So, then, is it too much to expect that American leaders in 1956, or 1961, or 1964 could have understood the ultimate consequences of their agonized and generally conservative, incremental decisions with respect to Indochina? Yes, it is too much to expect. It would have taken men and women of the very greatest stature, and they were not at hand.

But is it too much to expect that General Westmoreland, General Earl Wheeler, and their staffs might have better understood their professional obligations in the face of a novel challenge? No, that is not too much to expect. It is not too much to expect a professional soldier to put his country's interests above those of his service or his personal reputation, and that was precisely the problem. Thanks to Nikita Khrushchev's famous speech about "wars of national liberation" as the new face of the anti-imperialist struggle, and to President Kennedy's conclusion that the United States needed to invest more resources into our capabilities to fight counterinsurgencies, a furious argument broke out in the early 1960s within the middle ranks of the U.S. Army. While some major figures, such as General James Gavin, supported Kennedy's view, most senior Army brass resisted it firmly. General George H. Decker, Army Chief of Staff from 1960 to 1962, summarized this view with the comment that "any good soldier can defeat a guerrilla."

The conventionalists won the bureaucratic wars, and, as is the way of the world in such matters, their views hardened from having been subject to criticism. The conventionalists got promoted and, with those hardened views firmly implanted in their heads, rose to their places just in time to mismanage the war in Vietnam. Lind quotes an anonymous Army officer in Vietnam as saying, "I'm not going to destroy the tradi-

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tions and doctrine of the United States Army just to win this lousy war." Such sentiment not only reflects Westmoreland's misguided devotion to conventional tactics in the face of an unconventional situation, but also the primacy the Army accorded doctrinal orthodoxy (and the professional egos attached to the doctrines) above all else. The American people had a right to expect better, and certainly deserved better. Which brings us back to Robert McNamara.

Is it too much to have expected McNamara to have bucked the tide within the Johnson Administration as a whole and opposed the 1965 escalation? Yes, it is too much, and we would all be better off if McNamara ceased his self-flagellation over the point. But is it too much to have expected McNamara to put a stop to Westmoreland's disastrous direction of the war before the end of 1966? No, it is not too much, because that was his job. McNamara himself was one of those who dressed down General Gavin for wanting to develop anti-guerrilla tactics, and he gave Westmoreland the leeway to wreak maximum havoc. It was also McNamara the systems analyst, along with the senior Army brass, who became fixated with body counts and other conventional indicators of military success that mislead in unconventional contexts. If McNamara insists on contrition, fine; he has much for which to repent. Just let him get the reasons right.

These are sharp judgments, and others will disagree with them. But that is nothing new. It is hard to reckon with *Fortuna*, for she's not just any woman; she's a bitch. FT

## Optics

Black is no color
and all of them.

White is all colors
and none of them.

So it's simply
a matter of reflection

and absorption, prism
and paper, prison

and sentence.

**Gilbert Allen**

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# Philosophy in an Old Key

***Edward T. Oakes***

**Confessions of a Philosopher: A Personal Journey Through Western Philosophy from Plato to Popper.** By Bryan Magee. *Modern Library. 512 pp. $13.95 paper.*

Philosophers, it would seem, are born, not made. At least that is the impression one gets from reading some of their childhood reminiscences. Stephen Toulmin, for example, a British philosopher now working in the United States, recounts the time as a child when he was on vacation with his family in a cottage just north of London. Because the sun sets so late in the summer in the British Isles, he noticed one evening, already in bed and about to fall asleep, that the red curtains blocking the light of the setting sun gave off a slightly different hue when he closed his left eye than they did when he closed his right eye. "I simply did not know what to make of *that*," he recalls with a still lingering boyish, italicizing wonder. "If those two natural allies—my two eyes—gave such different testimony, I just did not know *what* to believe. What color *did* the curtains have, really and truly? Forty years later I am still not wholly clear about the answer to that question, or even whether the question has any straightforward answer at all."

The nineteenth-century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer once remarked that no philosopher ever sets pen to paper without being goaded into it by some nagging problem he can neither soothe over nor forget. Toulmin's anecdote leads one to suspect that Schopenhauer should perhaps have added that such nagging most often begins at the very dawn of rational consciousness. If so, then no philosopher has given a more convincing account for how a child's wonder must motivate the adult philosopher than Bryan Magee has done in his recently published intellectual autobiography, *Confessions of a Philosopher.* And like Toulmin's moment of bafflement, Magee's began as a child in bed about to fall asleep:

> Until I was five I shared a bed with my sister, three and a half years older than me. After our parents had switched out the light we would chatter away in the darkness until we fell asleep. But I could never afterwards remember falling asleep. It was always the same: one moment I was talking to my sister in the dark, and the next I was waking up in a sunlit room having been asleep all night. Yet every night there must have come a time when I stopped talking and settled down to sleep. It was incomprehensible to me that I did not experience that, and never remembered it. . . . That going to sleep was something I did every night yet never experienced was for years a source of active bafflement.

Magee's entire life, it seems, has been punctuated with one philosophical impasse or crisis after another. He seems almost to have inherited the philosophical obsession in his genes. On one particularly harrowing occasion he found himself in his prep school chapel and felt overcome by an attack of solipsism (not in the technical sense of actively denying the existence of others but in the more generic sense of not knowing how to connect the existence of others with his quite separate awareness of their existence). Perhaps every child or adolescent has had a similar experience, but what

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makes Magee's realization so remarkable is the physiological effect it had on him:

> With a sudden horrible churning over of my stomach I realized that the natural way of putting this into words was to say: "When I close my eyes they disappear." Even now, after all these years, what I cannot put into words is how indescribably appalling I found that moment of insight, how nightmarish. I was inundated by crashing great tidal waves of nausea, claustrophobia, and isolation, as if I were forever cut off from everything that existed—apart from myself—and as if I were trapped for life inside my own head. I thought I was going to throw up or faint. I was overwhelmed by panic and a need to escape from the situation—just get out. Groping and blundering, I lurched along the row of boys in my pew, and under the eyes of the whole school . . . I veered distraught and [ran] out of the building. What everyone commented on afterwards was the color of my face, which was apparently green—so no one doubted that I had felt ill, and therefore no one questioned me about why I had walked out.

Readers of Immanuel Kant's famous *Critique of Pure Reason* know that it concludes with a treatment of various "antinomies," assertions that, when taken to their logical conclusion, ineluctably lead to the positing of the opposite statement, the most famous being the antinomies of space and time. How can either space or time be finite, since their presumed boundaries can then be extended to just a few inches or seconds more? But if they are *truly* infinite, how can anything be *located*, specifically and definitely, anywhere inside the space-time continuum if that continuum itself has no definition?

Everyone knows that Kant's *Critique* makes for tough reading, and ever since its publication great minds have broken their skulls on this section of the book. But how many people have knocked their brains out *in childhood* pondering these antinomies? Magee found himself tormented by these questions several years before the attack of solipsism in the school chapel. And in true Kantian fashion, he realized that this must say something about reason's relation to the world: "The more things I thought about, the more problems I acquired. But I never seemed to acquire any solutions. And yet, it seemed to me, solutions there had to be. Something or other must be the case with regard to each one of these questions, if only I could find out what it was."

It will surely not surprise the reader to learn that, like Stephen Toulmin, Bryan Magee became a philosopher—but one of a special stripe. His innate drive, almost obsession, to gnaw at philosophy's apparently meatless bone might seem to some a dubious endowment, but Magee's intensely visceral commitment to the quest that true philosophy represents has given him a unique insight into the woes that currently beset professional philosophy.

When he turned forty, for example, he was asked to become a tutor in philosophy at Oxford's Balliol College, and was stunned to learn that Oxford's examination in the history of philosophy covered only Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. Working as a tutor also required him to read large amounts of secondary literature solely because his pupils were required by the examiners to show familiarity with, as he tartly says, "a lot of unimportant books about important books." This experience left him with an extremely dim view of what happens to a student who must search for wisdom through such a tedious medium:

> Academic life, at least in the humanities, is bedeviled by an obsession with secondary literature, most of it highly ephemeral. This secondary literature is provincial not only in time but in place. Students at Oxford are constantly having their attention drawn to work by local academics which would scarcely be on the periphery of people's consciousness in, say, a major American university, where the reverse situation is likely to apply. This has the effect of cheating the student. Instead of soaking themselves in the imperishable masterpieces of their subject and developing their powers of independent thought . . . in relation to those, they spend half their time studying writings that will be considered scarcely worth reading by anyone thirty years later and are not studied even now in most other universities. A knowledge of such dispensable and ever-changing secondary literature is often seen as the hallmark of professionalism by people whose only distinctive intellectual possession it is.

No passage I have read recently has better captured the central pathos of higher education today, at least in the English-speaking world. Most analyses of the mediocrity of college and university instruction tend to congeal into jeremiads against the politicized instruction of "tenured radicals." But a sober, nonideological analysis will reveal that the pathos Magee laments here can be found across the board, irrespective of the politics of the instructor or the mission of the school: far too many colleges spoon-feed their hapless undergraduates the thin gruel of textbook summaries.

Obsession with secondary literature also exposes professors and their recruiting deans to a trendiness

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that will nearly always miss quality work when it goes against the grain. As Magee says, "Doing what others do is one of the most striking characteristics of academic life in general."

Even worse, when a false reading of a classic text worms its way into the secondary literature the interpretation takes on a life of its own, and from then on even the most well-read philosophers will insist that such-and-such a work "must" mean what the received wisdom says it means. Magee recounts two times in his life when he finally got around to reading a famous work on his own and realized that what he had been taught about the work in question was completely wrong. At Oxford he had always been told, for example, that Karl Popper's "falsifiability thesis" was merely a variation on the Verification Principle of logical positivism; but when he finally read Popper's *Logic of Scientific Discovery*, he realized it represented the *refutation* of logical positivism.

An even more bizarre example of this blinkered refusal to read a primary text on its own terms can be seen in the "reception history," so to speak, of Ludwig Wittgenstein's famous early work, usually known by its shorthand title, the *Tractatus*. As an undergraduate at Oxford, Magee was told that the book was *the* founding constitutional text of logical positivism, when in fact it too refutes logical positivism root and branch. But the story gets "curiouser and curiouser" when the reader discovers that Wittgenstein makes his purpose clear right in the preface to the book and peppers the entire work with sentences like these: "It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental." . . . "The whole modern conception of the world is founded on the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenomena." . . . "We feel that when *all possible* scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched." Nor does he hide the essentially mystical implications of his thought: "It is not how things are in the world that is mystical, but that it exists."

Magee happened to read the *Tractatus* shortly after his graduation from Oxford, and the experience stunned him into a kind of retrospective disbelief: "I could not see how all those people who had been talking and writing about the *Tractatus* could possibly have read it." But even more disconcerting was the reaction he got after he cited chapter and verse from the book itself to his erstwhile teachers: "It seemed self-evident to them that I must have got it all wrong. How could I be right and their friends wrong? The very idea was absurd. That I should keep buttonholing people about it was grotesque and—well, embarrassing."

These vivid lines must not be allowed to give the impression that Magee's book is one long rant against all professional philosophers working in an academic setting, although with Oxford philosophers he can be quite harsh, as when he says that "they seemed to me like non-music-lovers who had sneaked into the concert without paying." Magee had begun a doctorate at Oxford, but when he was offered a year's postgraduate fellowship at Yale in 1956 he grabbed at the chance—and finally found an academic setting where real philosophy was taking place, especially in Brand Blanshard's seminar on Kant: "The interpretation put on everything by Oxford philosophers had been analogous to the interpretations put on current affairs by active members of the Communist Party: partisan, belligerent, propagandist, intolerant, nakedly self-oriented, and one-sided. Blanshard stood in contrast to all this. Although he was himself in opposition to the tradition he was discussing, he presented it with admirable fairness in its relationship to other traditions."

And I am sure the reader can imagine Magee's culture shock at seeing those exotic animals called *practicing scientists* attending the seminar on the philosophy of science. "[This] seminar brought home to me just how self-contradictory the situation at Oxford had been at the time when most philosophers had taught that scientific utterance was the paradigm of meaningful talk about the world, and that the only future left for philosophy was to become the handmaid of science, when those same philosophers were not only innocent of any taint of scientific knowledge but were not even sufficiently interested in it to acquire some." Yale was such a bracing time for him because the professors went to *reality* for adjudication, while Oxford's professors only consulted each other: "Their whole life-situation was what existentialists mean by 'inauthentic.' If they had *really* understood, and believed, and felt the truth of what they themselves taught [about science], they would have lived differently. Their philosophizing was in bad faith."

So Magee was forced to wend his way through the world feeling as vulnerable and isolated as Socrates must have in Periclean Athens. (No wonder the mere thought of solipsism could turn his face green.) And crucial to his isolation was his intuition, inherited from early childhood, that common sense must be illusory. If he had accepted common sense as a child, his bewilderment would never have arisen in the first place; and as his bafflement as a child led to isolation then, so too the same philosophical puzzlement has led to his isolation from his friends and colleagues, but especially the rationalists.

Rationalists claim at every turn that they oppose dogmatism in all its forms and regard themselves as crusaders against obscurantism and lazy thinking. But for Magee this pose has no basis in reality whatever. When

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questioned more deeply, his rationalist friends proved to be as dogmatic as anyone else:

> If one drew their attention to the fact that there seemed to be no way in which our reasoning power could make sense of this or that basic feature of the world or of our experience, this was seen by them as a reason for not raising the question. What they wanted to do was confine their lives to the domain within which they *could* make sense of things. So at an only slightly deeper and more critical level they really turned out to share most of the attitudes of [religious believers].

No wonder, then, that the hero of *Confessions of a Philosopher* is Immanuel Kant, for "Kant makes the point early on that if reason leads us into self-contradictions and impasses, reality cannot correspond to it, and therefore it cannot be possible even in principle for us to understand reality by the use of reason alone."

Magee is particularly insightful on Kant's moral philosophy. For the very existence of moral categories is itself another antinomy, a proof that the empirical world of cause-effect cannot correspond to the whole of reality. Just try, Magee suggests, expunging moral categories from our ordinary discourse. Not even atheists—not even the Marquis de Sade—managed that. What Kant has done, and brilliantly, is to force the determinist either to abandon *all* moral categories or else to forsake his determinism. But the former option can never work, as Magee explains, because to do so would make one a psychopath, someone "with no sense whatsoever of right and wrong."

But once let the determinist insert that dangerous word "ought" into the proceedings, then out goes his determinism, for he would then be attributing to his interlocutor the ability to act otherwise: "Even the wicked do not regard themselves as mere things, mere physical objects like a chair or a table, without rights or moral claims of any sort. Everyone wants to be treated with moral decency, even those who do not show it in their behavior to others; and for this to be even possible it is necessary for others to have choice, at least sometimes."

Most philosophers have noticed this dilemma, but those who accept a commonsense view of the world are forced to explain free will in terms of the natural world (for example, John Dewey defined freedom as a function of our relation to nature). But this for Magee is the equivalent of trying to catch the decisions of free will "in the act," so to speak, by finding the determinants for a decision in various biological drives and rational *motivations*, which are then taken to be the tokens of determinism: *since* an act occurs under a motivation it thus cannot be free. But to look for free will in the empirical world in this way is for Magee like his own efforts as a child to catch himself in the act of falling asleep. It cannot be done: "These acts [of decision-making] on our part seem perpetually to spring into existence out of nothing. However carefully we try to penetrate their provenance with the most sharply concentrated attention we find ourselves encountering nothing at all—no explanation, no causal connection with anything else, a void."

Kant's achievement was to produce a rational account for why such things cannot be given a rational account. This paradox is no mere epistemological point without any implication for the nature of the world we live in. Quite the contrary: Kant's philosophy claims that science is in principle incapable of grasping reality in its totality, which means that reality must *be* different from what it *seems*, and in a most radical way: "Although we know *that* there is a part of total reality which is not contained within the empirical world, *the very fact that it is not so contained* means that we are permanently unable to have direct knowledge of its contents."

Unfortunately, at this point, at least in my opinion, the author goes astray. In his rehearsal of Kant's views Magee comes close to the standard insights of such famous "negative theologians" as the sixth-century Syrian monk known to history as Dionysius the Areopagite, as when he says that Kant "rules out, permanently, any direct knowledge or understanding of a transcendental God, or any knowledge that we have souls—still less that they survive death. [He] provides an exceedingly powerful demonstration that there cannot be any such thing as specifically religious or theological knowledge." Well, perhaps, but Magee goes overboard when he claims that Kant has thereby refuted the claims of the Roman Catholic Church that the existence of God can be proved; he rather airily asserts, without establishing his case, that "Kant has demolished the traditional 'proofs' for the existence of God."

Where Magee goes astray, in my opinion, is at the place where all post-Kantians have gone astray: in their reaction to the great glaring inconsistency in Kant's thought. Notoriously, Kant had followed Hume in holding that the concept (or technically, the "category") of causality belongs only to the *empirical* world. But he also insisted that beyond the phenomenal world lies, for reasons adduced above, a "noumenal" world unreachable by direct experience but which alone can account for moral categories and our sense of the sublime. But to assert that this posited noumenal world *accounts* for our experience is thereby, as nearly everyone has noticed, to assert some kind of cause-effect relationship proceeding from noumena to phenome-

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na, as even Kant's contemporaries and supporters pointed out.

Generally speaking, there are three ways to react to this glaring contradiction. One can, with Hegel and his followers, dispense with the concept of the noumena altogether and declare by fiat that the only world is the phenomenal world and that philosophy can therefore only be a pure phenomenology. Or one can subscribe, as Magee does, to Schopenhauer's view that since free *decision* is the great indicator of the noumenal world, the unseen but real world is essentially *will*—a view that by a rapid declension leads to Nietzsche's famous "will to power" with its attendant ideologization of every feature of contemporary life, where every issue boils down to Karl Marx's question, "Who's got the power?"

But another option remains, and one that Magee does not even so much as consider: the Thomist option. With remarkable perspicacity Pope Leo XIII saw that the Thomist schema of causality could be the linchpin for a new apologetics that might win back the world of intellectuals to the Roman Church. By and large the program, launched with his 1879 encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, did not live up to its promise, partly due to the fact that Rome had earlier placed Kant's first *Critique* on the Index of Forbidden Books, a self-defeating regulation that practically guaranteed philosophical mediocrity among those who obeyed it.

But another reason for the muted response of the secular world to Thomism must also stem from the manner in which Leo XIII's tocsin-call was heard. For, especially in the twentieth century, several Jesuit authors such as Pierre Rousselot, Joseph Maréchal, and Karl Rahner heard Leo's trumpet as sounding a call to seek a *reconciliation* with the Kantian system by incorporating his transcendental view of the noumenal self *into* the Thomist system.

In my opinion, this movement has proved a failure, although it is not possible to establish the case within the confines of an essay. But one fact, easily established and universally recognized, at least tells us of the *fact* of the failure, if not the reasons why. By their own account, "transcendental Thomists" (to use the official descriptive term for this school) claimed that with their newly minted philosophy they would be able to convey the credibility of the Christian message to the world: only by soldering the Thomist to the Kantian system would the gospel be heard by modern man, they insisted. Unfortunately for this project, almost no one outside the coterie of transcendental Thomists pays even the remotest attention to their work, which must surely reflect badly on the viability of the project to begin with. Rousselot still maintains a shadowy existence—like Achilles in Homer's Underworld—in the Jesuit university in Rome, and every once in a while a monograph will appear on Maréchal from some obscure European press. And of course the thought of Karl Rahner still lives on (albeit pretty much in full retreat) in such redoubts as the Catholic Theological Society of America (or at least among its superannuated members: in my experience most younger theologians have no interest in Rahner). But like the thought of Bernard Lonergan, whose work bears certain similarities to this school, none of these men is studied, or even heard, in secular academia.

How much different was the situation in the case of those full-throated, two-fisted Thomists like the French laymen Jacques Maritain and Étienne Gilson, men who saw the fundamental incompatibility of Thomism and Kantianism. More crucially, they also realized that Kant's contradictions could be resolved only by accepting Thomas' schema of the Creator's causality and creation's effectiveness. Again, this essay is not the venue for establishing the legitimacy of their approach, but I hope it serves my point at least to remind the reader that these two foreigners were virtually lionized by the secular academy in North America after World War II. (Their appointments were, tellingly, at such places as Harvard, Princeton, and the Universities of Toronto and Chicago.) They exerted so much influence among secular intellectuals that it led to the witticism that at the University of Chicago, Protestant students (or Marxist students, in another version) were taught Roman Catholic philosophy by Jewish professors.

It goes without saying that almost none of that achievement remains today. One of the unanticipated effects of Vatican II was to set off a kind of neutron bomb in the mind of the Church, leaving buildings intact but gutting out the Church's long accumulated and still viable synthesis of faith and reason so laboriously hammered out over the centuries. Now most traces of the intellectual resources available to the Catholic apologist have simply vanished from the curriculum of seminaries and Catholic institutions of higher learning without anyone seeming to have noticed what happened.

One of the more remarkable features of *Confessions of a Philosopher* is how rarely its author mentions medieval philosophy. One cannot help but place at least part of the blame for Magee's lack of engagement with medieval philosophy on the negligence of so many contemporary Catholic philosophers and theologians, who seem not to realize the resources they have at their disposal. "How are they to hear unless someone preaches?" St. Paul famously asked. And the same question might be addressed to Catholic thinkers about agnostics like Magee, although in their current blinkered state, one wonders how rhetorical the question would be. Of them we might also add

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Paul's concluding rhetorical question: "And how can they preach unless they are sent?" (Romans 10: 14-15) Or, to vary the point (see Luke 14: 31-34), if they were sent, how would they be outfitted for battle?

In any event, whether from the inadequacies of contemporary Thomism or from a typical Anglo-Saxon blindness to medieval philosophy, Bryan Magee never engages the Thomist tradition and thus ends up, *faute de mieux*, following Schopenhauer's line of argument. Nor was the Schopenhauerian route Magee took all that unfortunate, for he makes clear how many are the virtues of that cantankerous German. Perhaps because he was saddled with an unpleasantly misogynist and deeply belligerent personality (he regularly slept with a pistol under his pillow), Schopenhauer has not been read very much—Magee in fact came to the man quite late in his career. But, as the author shows in marvelous detail, this native of Danzig has a great deal to teach contemporary philosophy, not least how to write.

One of the most engaging features of Schopenhauer's philosophy emerges from his insistence that a good style is crucial to the integrity of any philosophy. For him deliberate, consistent obscurity is prima facie evidence for inauthentic thought. He even scores Kant for this sin, much as he admires—indeed depends on—Kant for his own achievement. And true to form, this famous rival to Hegel (Schopenhauer so despised Hegel that he deliberately scheduled his own lectures to conflict with Hegel's, with the predictable effect that no one attended his lectures but instead went to hear the much more famous Hegel) expresses his contempt for bad writing in magnificent prose:

> *Kant*'s style bears throughout the stamp of a preeminent mind, genuine strong individuality, and quite exceptional powers of thought . . . [but his] language is often indistinct, indefinite, inadequate, and sometimes obscure. . . . The most injurious result of Kant's occasionally obscure language is that it acted as *exemplar vitiis imitabile* [a bad example for the decadent to follow]; indeed, it was misconstrued as a pernicious authorization. The public was compelled to see that what is obscure is not always without significance; consequently, what was without significance took refuge behind obscure language. *Fichte* was the first to seize this new privilege and use it vigorously; *Schelling* at least equalled him; and a host of hungry scribblers, without talent or honesty, soon outbade them both. But the height of audacity in serving up pure nonsense, in stringing together senseless and extravagant mazes of words, such as had previously only been heard in madhouses, was finally reached in *Hegel*, and became the instrument of the most barefaced general mystification that has ever taken place, with a result which will appear fabulous to posterity and remain henceforth as a monument to German stupidity.

Magee completely agrees with Schopenhauer here and praises him for realizing that "bad thinking drives out good and, because it perpetrates harm, must not be ignored but has to be fought to the death." For the same reason Magee will condemn recent trends in Continental philosophy, and his indictment of it sounds remarkably like Schopenhauer's philippic against "German stupidity." For him when a philosophical school's style is consistently murky, this automatically indicates a weakness in its outlook or methodology.

Magee's attraction to Schopenhauer goes beyond "mere" questions of style. Iris Murdoch once remarked of Gilbert Ryle that his writings describe a world in which no one would ever fall in love or join the Communist Party. Not so with Schopenhauer's world. In fact Magee mentions in passing that Schopenhauer is one of the few Western philosophers to discuss the philosophical implications of sex, a remark that reminds one how rarely the subject is treated in philosophy, given that erotic electricity is nearly as pervasive to us as sensory perception, a subject endlessly harped upon by philosophers, nearly to the point of death. But except for Plato, St. Augustine (if the reader counts him as a philosopher), Schopenhauer himself, Paul Ricoeur, Roger Scruton, and (back when he was plying his trade as a philosopher) Karol Wojtyla, one must range quite far beyond the established canon to find sober *philosophical* discussions of sex, a vacuum that allows poseurs like Sigmund Freud and Wilhelm Reich to hold forth unopposed with their unverifiable, indeed preposterous, theories.

Perhaps the most crucial debt Magee owes to Schopenhauer can be gleaned in this short sentence: "At the heart of the mystery, it seems to me, must lie the relationship between the self and the empirical world in which it is not an object. In fact I am tempted to believe that the ultimate mystery *is* the relationship between the self and the empirical world." This is pure Schopenhauer, and hits the mark so directly that one is still left wondering why it did not lead both men to a more direct appropriation of Christian faith. Leaving aside the case of Schopenhauer (who gravitated to the Upanishads), I was left in constant amazement at how often Magee would, often unawares, sidle up to religious truth, realize where he was going, and then back away immediately.

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For example, basing himself firmly on his Kantian and Schopenhauerian views, he will gingerly admit the possibility of the soul's immortality in these telling words: "[There is] a possibility that total reality includes a self or selves that are not in space or time, not within the realm of possible observation or experience, and therefore not possible objects of empirical knowledge. If this logical possibility is realized it brings with it an explanation of free will, and one that would meet the doubts we are considering." Given everything he has said up until now (this sentence comes in the last chapter), he could hardly aver anything else. But notice how quickly the author (no falling asleep here!) "catches himself in the act," as it were. No sooner has he admitted this than he wants to make sure the reader hears him clear his throat of any possible religious virus: "I am not religious, and I regard the adoption of religious faith as incompatible with openness to truth. What I have done is point out that certain possibilities exist, and that whether they are actualized or not is something we cannot know."

From my point of view as a theologian, I am not sure what else a philosopher can say past this point, for in fact Magee has brought his reflections to the very threshold of faith. But having placed himself there while refusing to step over it, he is forced into a lot of hemming and hawing. For the first time in this five hundred page book the reader finds Magee adopting a writing style riddled with hesitation. He reads here almost like Penelope with her shawl, with each sentence unravelling the one that went before:

> I certainly do not advocate belief in the truth of those propositions, given that we have inadequate grounds for any such belief. But nevertheless the possibility that they are true cannot be ruled out. And far from being the case that they have been derived from religion, it is my belief that, historically, things have been the other way about, and the religious doctrines have been arrived at as a result of the possible truth of these propositions. It is because they could be true, and because human beings have exceedingly powerful reasons for wanting to believe that they are, *yet the propositions themselves cannot be adequately supported by rational argument,* that they have become articles of religious faith.

Exactly! How unfortunate it is that Magee seems never to have read the apologetics of Monsignor Ronald Knox, who addressed precisely this issue in his book *The Hidden Stream*: "You may picture human thought as a piece of solid rock, but with a crevice here and there—the places, I mean, where we think and think and it just does not add up. And the Christian mysteries are like tufts of blossom which seem to grow in those particular crevices, there and nowhere else." That is why for Knox there is, philosophically, *already* the mystery of personality before there is, theologically, the mystery of the Trinity and Incarnation; there is, philosophically, *already* the mystery of appearance and reality before we encounter the mystery of the Real Presence; there is *already* the mystery of the mind before we begin to detect, and then open ourselves to, the mystery of Spirit.

I do not wish to deny the author's dilemma. Stepping over any threshold into an unknown world holds all kinds of terrors for the uninitiated, terrors that lifelong dwellers of the "realm beyond" never advert to (children's literature throughout the world provides numerous examples, such as C. S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*). But holding back entails a heavy price as well. This struck me most vividly when I read the passage that probably comes closest to representing Magee's manifesto to the world:

> Not being religious myself, yet believing that most of reality is likely to be permanently unknowable to human beings, I see a compelling need for the demystification of the unknowable. It seems to me that most people tend either to believe that all reality is in principle knowable or to believe that there is a religious dimension to things. A third alternative—that we can know very little but have equally little ground for religious belief—receives scant consideration, and yet seems to me to be where the truth lies. Simple though it is, people have difficulty getting their minds round it. In practice I find that rationalistic humanists often think of me as someone with soft-centered crypto-religious longings while religious people tend to see me as making token acknowledgment of the transcendental while being actually still far too rationalistic. What this means is that each sees me as a fellow-traveller of the other—when in fact I occupy a third position which neither of them seems to see the possibility of, and which repudiates both. What I want very much to see are two mass migrations, one out of the shallows of rationalistic humanism to an appreciation of the mystery of things, and the other out of religious faith to a true appreciation of our ignorance.

Magee has carved out for himself a position almost unique to himself—which of course in no way implies it is wrong. But when he then goes on to hope for

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"mass migrations" to his position, one must wonder how well thought out his position really is. I for one would certainly welcome the sight of the smug secularists among us moving *en masse* out of the "shallows of rationalistic humanism." But whenever has true faith *not* had a "true appreciation of our ignorance"? No doubt many pseudo-believers think they know more than they do, and they are usually the noisiest among us. But *all* the great saints and theologians felt otherwise. *Si enim comprehendis, non est Deus*, said St. Augustine (in Sermon 117): if you have grasped something, whatever it is that you have grasped, you can be sure that it is not God.

We thus must leave Bryan Magee at the threshold where he has brought his reflections. As he rightly says, perhaps *the* mystery is the one where the transcendent self interacts with the empirical world, and never is that more true than in the decision of each soul to accept God or not. But the author is clearly a man willing to pursue arguments wherever they lead—and in this culture of monumental and pervasive intellectual meretriciousness, that itself is an achievement, one that stands out as much as Socrates must have in a once-smug and finally defeated Athenian empire. And speaking of Socrates, Magee has written about his own life in such a way that we can imagine him serving as living proof of Socrates' adage that the unexamined life is not worth living, for in his unobtrusive way he has established the corollary: look how worth living is the examined life!

The second-century church father St. Irenaeus says in his most famous aphorism that "the glory of God is man fully alive." I have no idea whether the author will take the following remark as a compliment or not, but in this minor masterpiece he has given us, however inadvertently, "confessions" in the Augustinian sense. That is, he has laid bare for the reader a life that continues—in its abundant richness and humanity, in its unsparing honesty and search for the truth, in its instinctive, almost unerring sense for the genuine article over the pretentious simulacrum—to give glory to God. FT

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# A Pro-Life Loss of Nerve?

## *James K. Fitzpatrick*

There are times when it is hard to accept that advocates of legal abortion mean what they say. One wonders, for example, if anyone actually believes that partial-birth abortion is distinguishable from infanticide in any meaningful way; or thinks it perceptive to make the point that many pro-lifers are not advocates of generous welfare payments and increased government spending for child care programs. You will remember the latter proposition, advanced frequently in recent election campaigns: that pro-lifers lack sincerity because they "pretend to be concerned about the life of the unborn child, but refuse to spend money to care for children already born." By this logic, we ought not toss a drowning man a life preserver unless we are also willing to take him into our homes and support him the rest of his life.

There is one pro-choice argument, however, that in my opinion hits the mark, an argument that I have never heard a pro-life activist answer satisfactorily. It goes something like this: "You pro-lifers are hypocritical. You say that aborting a fetus is the taking of innocent unborn life. Yet you insist that you have no intention of charging a woman who procures an abortion with being an accessory to a murder. You say your intention is to prosecute only the doctors who perform the abortion. But why? If the woman hired a local thug to kidnap and kill her child, you would prosecute her as an accessory. More to the point: you leap to disassociate yourselves from those who employ violence against abortion clinics. Why again? Such reticence does not make sense if you really think you are acting to save a child's life."

One cannot dismiss this with a shrug. Consider, for example, how we would react if we found ourselves in a hospital maternity ward as a man with a meat cleaver moves down the rows of cribs. He begins hacking away at the infants. He has killed two infants so far, and there are twenty more to go. You have a pistol with you. What would you do? What would you expect someone else to do in such a situation? What would even the most committed opponents of capital punishment recommend?

Let us be more precise to cover all the bases. Let us posit that it is too late to try to reason with the man, and that the risk is too great that he will kill more infants if you try to use nonlethal force—shooting to wound, for instance—or call the police. Let us assume that it is not debatable: the only realistic way to save the lives of the other infants in the room is to shoot to kill, right away. Let us also assume that you have the training to use the pistol to kill the assailant. Hence there will be little danger to you or anyone else in the room if you fire your weapon. You can save the lives of the infants by pulling the trigger. If you hesitate, they die.

I submit that few would think highly of an individual who let the killings proceed because of a moral punctiliousness over the use of violence. Trying to block the murderer by sitting down in front of him and praying the rosary would be viewed as a shamefully half-hearted response, even though pro-life activists who use these tactics at abortion clinics are considered radicals by many. You may remember the outrage directed several months back at a young man in a Western state who walked away while a friend sexually assaulted and killed a young girl in a public restroom. The scene of the murderer following the young girl into the restroom was caught on tape, shocking the nation. The young man who walked away was treated as a pariah by Ed Bradley in the *60 Minutes* coverage of the story. The young man's college classmates were interviewed as part of the show. Without exception, they

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expressed contempt for his lack of courage and basic decency. Some wanted him expelled from college for his shameful behavior. They made clear that they would never associate with him if he remained in school.

Now, admittedly, the focus in this story was on the young man's refusal to even summon the police at the time of the assault. The anger directed at him was motivated by his indifference to the evil being committed by his friend, by his apathy and lack of concern for a fellow human being. Yet I think it fair to say that those who expressed contempt for his refusal to act would have applauded him if he had taken out a pistol and used it to save the life of the young girl—even if it meant shooting to kill. I submit that society would have treated him as a hero if he responded in this manner—once again, if we grant that he could not have saved her life in any other way. Society would also have lionized a young man who ran to his pickup truck to get his shotgun and then used it to kill Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris during their massacre of the students at Columbine High School.

The case could be made that those who bomb abortion clinics or shoot abortionists find themselves facing a moral calculus identical to that of this hypothetical young man with a gun at Columbine High School or the person facing the killer in the maternity ward. They are convinced that abortion is the killing of an innocent baby. Their religious leaders support them in this conclusion. They know that on the day they are carrying the bomb to the abortion clinic, or checking the sights on their rifle and waiting for the abortionist to drive into the clinic parking lot, a number of unborn children will be killed unless they use the lethal force at their disposal.

Pro-life religious leaders and politicians balk at this point. They express horror at the thought of using violence. Perhaps the prospect of serving a long jail sentence plays some role in shaping their spirit of moderation, but this doesn't seem right. Pro-life leaders are not usually thought to lack courage. Most of them argue that they are reluctant to use force because they abhor violence. We know their responses: "We cannot condone killing even in this case. Violence does not solve anything; we must use legal remedies. Violence is counterproductive, winning sympathy for the abortionists and the pro-abortion forces. Our commitment is to work within the law." No doubt, those who say these things are sincere. But the logic falls short in key areas.

First, Christian teaching (and secular thought as well) does condone violence when used to defend innocent victims of aggression, especially children. And violence can actually solve a great deal. It stopped Hitler. It ended slavery in this country. The police use lethal force to stop would-be murderers, rapists, and kidnappers in their tracks, sparing their intended victims. Clint Eastwood has made a career portraying men of action who refuse to wait for legal and peaceful remedies to defeat recognizable villainy. We view those characters as heroes.

I would argue that the legal status of abortion does not change this equation appreciably. Few moral theologians would find fault with members of an anti-Nazi resistance movement who employed lethal force against concentration camp guards to free imprisoned inmates at Auschwitz or Dachau. It is more likely that they would produce educational movies extolling their heroism. And yet religious leaders—Catholic, Protestant, Jewish—almost unanimously condemn violence against abortionists. Why? One can reach no other conclusion than that they see something different about killing the unborn and killing a living, breathing child. I do not charge hypocrisy, or a failure of nerve. I agree with those who are convinced that the fetus is unborn human life, yet I have never contemplated killing an abortionist or a member of his staff to save the children they are about to abort. I do not charge pro-lifers who are reluctant to use physical force with cowardice. There is another dynamic at work.

There are only a few plausible explanations for why pro-lifers refrain from violence in pursuit of their cause. One might argue that the unborn do not feel pain the way infants do, and are therefore less in need of our intervention in their defense. But this argument is weak. Watch a child born prematurely when it is time for its circumcision or first inoculations. It screams as loudly as a two-year old. The fetus flails about when the saline solution is injected into the sac as part of the abortion procedure. That is why the nursing staff during the procedure must hold down the mother. The child's reactions often cause her midsection to convulse violently. Moreover, the infants sleeping in the nursery about to be slashed to death by our imaginary killer probably would feel no pain if struck violently. They would die instantly, unaware of what happened to them. We would not be more supportive of standing by while their lives were taken if we were assured that they had been anesthetized first. The level of pain involved in the killing simply does not determine our view of murder in any other situation.

Others will emphasize that killing an individual abortionist will not end abortions; that he will be replaced by other abortionists and that abortion on demand will go on; that legal reform is the only way to bring about meaningful change. But, once again, this logic is not the one we apply when dealing with other murderers. We would not react patiently to a German

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who excused his reluctance to use force in 1942 to free concentration camp inmates if he argued that he was convinced at the time that he could do more good by working within the system to end Nazi control than by risking his own arrest and imprisonment in an armed strike to free a few dozen inmates scheduled for the gas chambers on a single morning. The central issue would be whether the use of force would save those under assault that day, at that moment. Neither would it alter our approval of the use of physical force against the concentration camp guards if we were told that it was likely that the inmates who escaped would likely be captured the next day and executed anyway. We would applaud the guerrilla who used bombs and rifle fire to free them. Long-term calculations are deemed irrelevant to the duty to save the individual lives at risk—except when the evil at hand is legal abortion.

Why the difference? Why do those who continue to scold Germans who stood by and did nothing when German Jews were rounded up excuse themselves from physical confrontations with abortionists? Why do those of us who would live our lives in shame if we stood by while a young child was mutilated by a child abuser have dinner and watch television, read a book and sleep a good night's sleep, while knowing that there are dozens of unborn children scheduled to be killed in their mothers' wombs within a short drive from our homes the next day? I trust the reaction would be more militant if euthanasia were made legal and we were faced with scenes of elderly men and woman screaming in resistance as they are strapped to the gurneys for their lethal injections.

I am convinced that the explanation for the reluctance of pro-lifers to use force against abortionists is rooted not in cowardice or in their understanding of what takes place during an abortion (pro-lifers are sure about that) but in their perception *of the abortionist and the woman who hires him* to take the life of her unborn child; that whether or not we have consciously articulated it for ourselves, we base our response to abortion on an understanding of the fundamental requirements of membership in a democratic society. We intuit that it is impermissible to employ lethal force against our fellow citizens unless and until they have become incorrigible criminals, contemptible individuals deserving of an application of force to halt their ongoing iniquities. We would expect an honorable man to use lethal force to stop Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris or Nazi concentration camp guards. We do not consider our neighbors who work in a local abortion clinic as comparably villainous. This is a crucial difference.

C. S. Lewis once wrote that "when the Round Table is broken every man must follow Galahad or Mordred; middle things are gone." His point was that the time may come when the societal bonds are so ruptured that forceful confrontation will become necessary with those who, until then, had been our fellow citizens. The corollary, of course, is that we cannot in good conscience call for an application of lethal force against our neighbors until that moment arrives. There must be a marked debasement of the social compact. The Round Table must already be broken. For all but the most radical pro-lifers, such a devolution has not yet occurred. Pro-life Americans are not willing to accept the sight of abortionists, their staff, and the women who employ them lying dead in our streets, because they remain our neighbors. They are neighbors who have fallen into evil ways on the issue of abortion, but neighbors nonetheless, fellow citizens who have permitted material concerns and self-centeredness to cloud their judgment on the question of abortion.

Historical parallels are hard to come by to press this point. After all, we are talking about large numbers of our neighbors reaching the conclusion that it should be legal to kill unborn children. The Civil War offers certain insights, however. It has been well documented that slavery was not the only issue in that conflict. But it was the central issue for Christian abolitionists in the North. By 1860 they were willing to take up arms against supporters of the Confederacy to end slavery. The question is: Why then? Why not before? Radical abolitionists such as John Brown and William Lloyd Garrison had called for military action against the South long before the war, but others were not as militant. They were willing to bide their time, seek a moral conversion of the slaveholders, work for a political solution even if that solution were to take many years.

Yet when war was declared there were few protests from these moderate factions. What had changed? Why was there a new willingness to back the use of force? It was not a result of a sudden breakthrough in their awareness of the evils of slavery. The writings and speeches of antislavery Americans in the middle years of the nineteenth century make clear that they had always viewed slavery as unequivocally immoral.

No doubt the war itself was responsible for much of the change, leading many who had urged compromise to conclude that the Rubicon had been crossed and that their former views were now academic. For whatever reason, the more moderate abolitionists now changed their view of Southern slaveholders and those who defended slavery. For antislavery Northerners the pro-slavery point of view had ceased to be a shortcoming that they were willing to tolerate to maintain harmony within our republican system of government. The Round Table had been broken. Continuing defenses of slavery were no longer the wrongheaded views of otherwise honorable men. Instead, they were culpable evils unworthy of forbearance and concilia-

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tion. We cut deals and compromises with those we consider individuals of honor. We make no concessions to the forces of evil.

Supporters of legal abortion in modern America are not seen in such an unforgiving light by pro-life Americans. The defenders of abortion include within their ranks many of our cultural leaders, including members of the clergy, people whose opinion is respected in other areas, whose views are lauded on the talk shows and in academic circles—the proverbial "best and brightest." Moreover, many pro-lifers have family members who disagree with them on abortion. All this makes a difference. It causes even militant pro-lifers to intuit that there is something markedly different between Nazi concentration camp guards and, say, the pro-choice delegates to the Democratic National Convention or members of the local chapter of the League of Women Voters.

Does a willingness to entertain apologies for the pro-abortion sentiments of their fellow citizens imply a degree of doubt about the nature of abortion on the part of pro-life Americans? To a certain extent—yes. It indicates, at the least, that pro-life Americans understand what causes many of their fellow citizens to err on this question. Let us once again consider the abolitionists to illustrate the point.

One could argue that the willingness to compromise with slaveholders in the years before the Civil War implied some self-doubt among early abolitionists; that their spirit of tolerance indicated, perhaps, that early abolitionists questioned the fitness of Southern slaves for equal membership in American society. This explains why so much abolitionist energy was directed toward returning blacks to Africa after emancipation. It seems fair to conclude that there was considerable sympathy in the North for those Southerners who hesitated to free their slaves in fear of what emancipation would do to their society. The fear was seen as not entirely unjustified. In other words, Southern slaveholders were viewed as being in error on the question of slavery by early abolitionists, but not as irretrievably evil men and women because of that failure. They were to be given time to come around to the truth, time to work out the social adjustments needed to deal with emancipation.

This, I submit, is also the view—more sensed than articulated at this point—of modern pro-life activists toward their pro-abortion fellow citizens. It is what explains why George W. Bush is able to react with such composure to his mother's pro-choice views. As he phrases it, "Good people disagree about abortion." While there is no reason to question Bush's repeated assurance that his goal is to insure that "every unborn child will be protected in law and welcomed in life," it is unlikely that Bush would have responded with such aplomb if it were discovered that his mother was a racist or anti-Semite. His reaction makes clear he does not think her error in this instance an egregious moral deficiency.

In other words, Bush is not so convinced of the persuasiveness of his pro-life position that he cannot imagine a high-minded individual coming to a different conclusion. I would argue that most pro-lifers are in the same boat. They do not see the mass of their pro-abortion fellow citizens as engaged in a calculated choice of evil. In fact, if pressed, I think most pro-life activists would concede that the fetus, especially in the early stages of its development, is not *self-evidently* (I repeat: not *self-evidently*) a human person; that there very well may be an element of religious belief that informs their conviction that human life begins at the moment of conception.

These distinctions are critical. We would not grant rapists, child molesters, or concentration camp guards any benefit of the doubt, regardless of how articulately they defended their behavior. We treat their transgressions as self-evident evils, their attempts at self-justification as crass dissimulation. That we treat differently Americans who promote and participate in abortions indicates our grasp of how easy it is for otherwise upstanding members of society to fall into error on this question—in spite of our own conviction that the act is an abomination.

Pro-lifers who condemn violence against abortionists and abortion clinics are not hypocritical, nor are they inconsistent. Their intuition that shooting a nurse at an abortion clinic is not the same as shooting the man with the meat cleaver in a maternity ward is correct, even though saving innocent lives is the objective in both cases. What the man is doing is outside and against just law. What the nurse does is, alas, permitted by unjust law. It is reasonable to believe that that unjust law can be changed, with the result that innumerable innocent lives will be saved. It follows that it is morally imperative to work for such change, which can be achieved only through the politics of persuasion. Pro-lifers are keenly aware of how difficult that task is. They are wrestling with a moral dilemma unlike any since the Civil War. But the Round Table is not broken, and, please God, it will not be in the future. FT

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# Books In Review

## A Flawed Exposé

**The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering.** By Norman G. Finkelstein. *Verso. 160 pp. $23.*

***Reviewed by* William D. Rubinstein**

As I write these words, *The Holocaust Industry* is causing enormous debate in British intellectual circles. It has received more publicity than any book on the Holocaust in recent years, and has been furiously attacked by many mainstream interpreters of Nazi genocide. Its aim is to show how a variety of persons and groups, some highly respected, some little more than rip-off artists, have exploited the Holocaust for political and financial ends. Norman Finkelstein's targets include revered figures of the Jewish world such as Elie Wiesel, influential Jewish groups such as the World Jewish Congress (WJC), and, most of all, the State of Israel and its vocal supporters.

*The Holocaust Industry* is greatly uneven in its value—indeed, I cannot think of another recent work that is both so very good and so very bad. While some of Finkelstein's attacks are unjustified, particularly those against the State of Israel and its supporters, his courageous attacks on the financial extortions by groups like the WJC are of great importance and one hopes they will make a difference. Many of the book's more hostile critics have attacked its strident tone; I find that tone defensible, especially given the author's careful sourcing of most of his claims, but for the same reason probably unnecessary.

Finkelstein first came to attention through a savage, trenchant attack he launched in 1989 on Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, published (with Ruth Bettina Birn) as *A Nation On Trial.* Although the task of refuting Goldhagen is not terribly difficult, Finkelstein's essay struck me as the most cogent of the many criticisms of Goldhagen's very dubious thesis that Germany uniquely adopted a national ideology of "exterminationist" anti-Semitism. Yet *A Nation On Trial* was marred by its curious, indeed bizarre, insistence on linking Goldhagen and his allies with support for Zionism and the State of Israel. For Goldhagen's thesis is virtually the opposite of the usual justification for Zionism, namely, that anti-Semitism is found, not in one nation, but in every society where there are Jews. What's more, Goldhagen never refers to Zionism or Israel in his book, either explicitly or by implication.

It is clear that, in fact, Finkelstein has such a continuing obsession with Zionism that he may fairly be termed an anti-Israel propagandist. He has written two books on this subject, *The Rise and Fall of Palestine* and *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*. The latter, a collection of essays, puts forth the thesis that, roughly, everything Zionism and Israel have done since the foundation of the movement is bad, and everything that the Palestinians and Arabs have done is good. Finkelstein routinely, almost automatically, compares Israel with Nazi Germany, although, presumably to avoid boredom, he also compares Israel's supporters with Stalinists. The presence of Noam Chomsky, Finkelstein's acknowledged mentor, is never far off.

Finkelstein's most notable qualities, then, are considerable intelligence and diligence, very great independence, and narrow-minded anti-Zionism. It must also be appreciated that he is avowedly a political leftist, and not (as many of the critics of *The Holocaust Industry* have wrongly suggested) a right-winger trucking, despite his Jewish origins, with anti-Semitism. (As Finkelstein too frequently reminds us, both of his parents are Holocaust survivors.) Many parts of Finkelstein's critique of the contemporary Jewish world have been made before by other leftist Jews, for instance by Lenni Brenner in *Jews in America Today* (1986), while venomous anti-Zionism has been a stock-in-trade of the extreme left since the 1960s.

Finkelstein's latest work, however, adds a totally original element by criticizing the activities of the WJC and other Jewish bodies, criticism which one need not be on the left (or the right) to accept. As a rule, Finkelstein's value as a commentator on Jewish affairs increases exponentially as he moves away from his hostile obsession with Zionism. The main thrust of his new book, and its most powerful and original feature, consists of a series of highly specific charges about the greed and rapacity of Jewish organizations seeking compensation for victims of the Holocaust, especially the WJC.

Despite its grandiose-sounding name, the WJC, founded in 1936, cannot be termed a representative body of the Jewish people. While it is linked to the representative Jewish organizations of most countries, in practice, as in any other independent body, its leaders set their own agendas. The WJC's current head, Edgar Bronfman, is the billionaire chief of Canada's Seagrams distilling empire. In the past, an international body like the WJC was clearly necessary to coordinate Jewish efforts in, say, the campaign against the oppression of Jews in the Soviet Union. But in

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recent years it has been without a clear or obvious agenda.

This lack of purpose has been one of the most important factors behind the activities Finkelstein attacks, rather like a cancer charity flailing around for something to do the day after science discovers a cure for cancer. Most of the hostile reviews of *The Holocaust Industry* have notably and studiously avoided commenting directly on the charges Finkelstein makes against the WJC, presumably because there is no adequate reply. Finkelstein accuses the WJC of being, in effect, a pirate ship, sailing the waters, hunting for booty, and using the unique moral credibility of the Holocaust to extort fortunes from European governments. The case made by Finkelstein appears unanswerable, and he deserves great credit for having the nerve to expose what appears to be a scandal of enormous proportions.

FINKELSTEIN DEVOTES most space to examining the WJC's campaign against the Swiss banks, a campaign that has received worldwide publicity. The banks were accused (in Tom Bower's words) of "a fifty-year Swiss-Nazi conspiracy to steal billions from Europe's Jews and Holocaust survivors" by refusing to hand over the dormant accounts of Holocaust victims to their heirs. This charge deserves careful examination.

First of all, we are not here looking at what became of the accounts held by murdered Jews in banks down the street in Warsaw, Vilna, or Prague, but those held by European Jews in banks in Switzerland. In Poland, however, to take the largest Jewish population center, although there was a Jewish middle class, the per capita income of Jews in the 1930s was less than $100 per year, and a quarter of Poland's Jews were kept from starvation only by charity from America. These Jews, the bulk of those who perished in the Holocaust, were as likely to hold funds in a Swiss bank account as they were to own a suite in the Waldorf Towers; the very idea is a kind of sick joke.

Moreover, Jews in western and central Europe—eastern Europe, where the Nazi death machine came without warning, is another matter—with the financial means, geographical mobility, sophistication, and foresight to hold a Swiss bank account were also those most likely to survive the Holocaust. Fully 90 percent of Austria's Jewish middle class, for instance, managed to emigrate in time. The most obvious reason why there are still dormant accounts in Swiss banks, opened in the 1930s by European Jews, is that they, and their entire families, were murdered by the Nazis, and there are no heirs left to claim the assets.

So, just how many dormant accounts held by European Jews in Swiss banks are there? A comprehensive auditing of the entire Swiss banking system found only 1,200 accounts where there was actual evidence that the depositor was a Jew who perished in the Holocaust; other estimates place the figure (without real proof of any kind) at twenty-five thousand such accounts. The value of ten thousand of these accounts for which full information is available (including those where there is no evidence that the depositor perished) has been put at about $170-$260 million, or roughly $20,000 per account. It must be stressed that these are only estimates.

The aim of any legitimate campaign must be to restore these accounts to the heirs of their depositors as quickly as possible, with suitable compensation where it can be shown that the delay was deliberate. After a lengthy campaign against it, Switzerland created an impartial committee, headed by former U.S. Federal Reserve chief Paul Volcker, and an independent committee including prominent Holocaust his-

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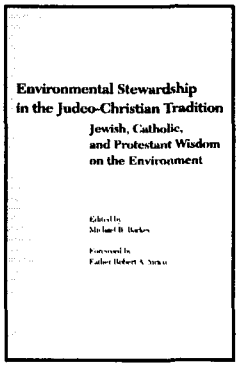

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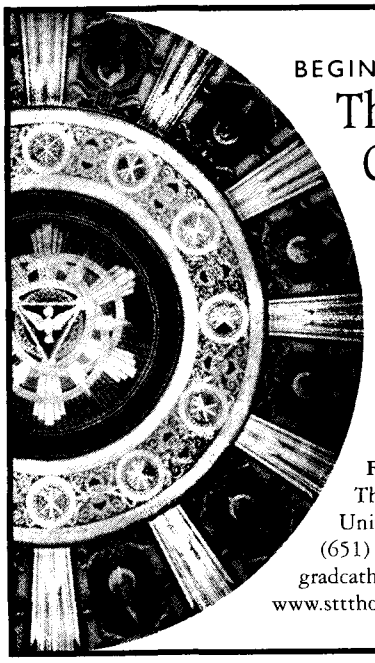
torians such as Saul Friedlander, to investigate these charges. Before these bodies could report—and probably because impartial investigation was likely to reveal a very different picture from that suggested by the WJC—the WJC added two further demands to the Swiss authorities: compensation for refugees allegedly denied asylum by the Swiss during the war, and compensation for bars of gold sold to Switzerland by Nazi Germany that were allegedly made from the fillings of victims' teeth. (Careful research revealed that "victim gold" purchased by the Swiss totaled $134,428 in value, and that the Swiss knew nothing about its origins.) A massive campaign aimed at forcing Switzerland to make billions available in "compensation" was launched by the WJC, with the governors of four American states threatening economic sanctions against the Swiss, and the City of Los Angeles withdrawing millions of dollars of pension funds from a Swiss bank. In 1998, rather than fight on, Switzerland agreed to an overall settlement of $1.25 billion.

IT WILL BE INTERESTING, at the end of the process of disbursing this money, to learn just how many Jewish dormant accounts actually exist, and in how many cases identifiable heirs were actually denied access to their money because of Swiss machinations. (I will not be holding my breath while I await the answers.) It will also be interesting to learn how much of this money will actually reach the relatives of Holocaust victims, as opposed to Jewish organizations or the administering bureaucracy. From past experience, we can expect very little.

The WJC has also presented demands to a number of other targets, including the newly democratic nations of eastern Europe. Poland, for instance, has been asked to pay compensation for lost Jewish property, though it is hard to see why. In the interwar years Poland was rife with anti-Semites and anti-Semitism, but it was, paradoxically, virtually the only nation in eastern Europe that never imposed any economic restrictions on Jews or racialist limitations on their full participation in the nation's economy. During the war millions of Polish Jews perished, but this was at the hands of the Germans, not the Poles. The Nazis regarded the Poles as racial inferiors and therefore ineligible to participate in the massacre of Jews. After the war, a Jewish community of up to 250,000 very briefly emerged again in Poland. Their property was indeed confiscated by the Communists, not because they were Jews but because they were capi-

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talists—the property of gentile capitalists was also seized. I personally cannot see any compelling reason why the present Polish government should pay one cent for former Jewish properties.

The WJC has also recently arranged a massive settlement with Germany to compensate wartime slave laborers. This is an altogether worthy goal, with one slight quibble—as Finkelstein notes, Germany has already been paying compensation to wartime slave laborers since 1952! Moreover, the WJC has vastly inflated the number of surviving Jewish slave laborers, to the extent that, as Finkelstein wryly points out, if accurate, the number of Holocaust victims must be so much lower than the standard number that the Jewish bodies pressing these claims might well be charged with "Holocaust denial."

It is difficult to believe that any person of good will could approve of these demands. As a Jew who lost relatives in the Holocaust, I find them frankly odious, and Finkelstein should be praised rather than condemned for exposing them.

AT THE SAME TIME, however, it is far from clear that there exists, in Finkelstein's terminology, a "Holocaust industry," or that Holocaust activists are necessarily motivated by the basest of motives. Finkelstein, for instance, says nothing in his book about the ongoing campaign to identify and punish Nazi war criminals, a campaign which, however controversial, is obviously not motivated by material gain. He is, moreover, emphatically wrong in connecting the growth of the centrality of the Holocaust in Western consciousness with Jewish support for Israel. The post-war "taboo" on serious discussion of the Holocaust was not broken by the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, as he repeatedly asserts, but by the Eichmann Trial of 1960-62, as every serious account of this subject notes.

The State of Israel has, indeed, been almost punctilious in not exploiting the Holocaust for political ends. While one might expect Israel to be dotted with Holocaust monuments on every street corner, in the whole of the country there is precisely one memorial to the Holocaust, Yad Vashem, on the hills outside Jerusalem. A place of dignity, it is probably best known for its avenue of trees planted, not in memory of murdered Jews, but to commemorate "Righteous Gentiles" who risked their lives to save Jews. Apart from Eichmann (and the ill-fated, highly


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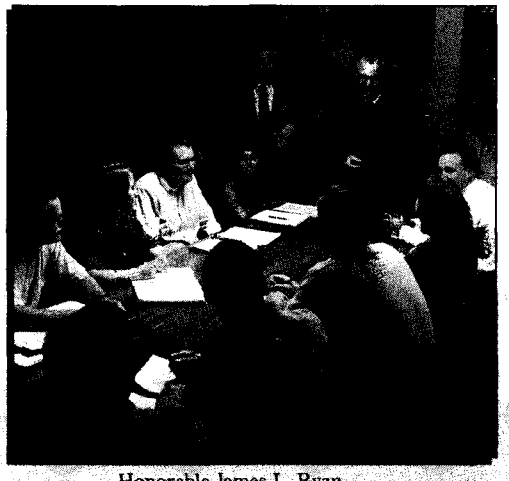

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unfortunate Demjanjuk trial of the 1980s), Israel has shown virtually no interest whatever in apprehending former Nazi war criminals, and, indeed, it is a legitimate charge that one might make against Israel that it has not tracked them down more rigorously.

It must also be stressed that the current centrality of the Holocaust flows from the power of that event to affect virtually everyone today: it is recognized by nearly everybody as an unspeakable horror that requires no "Holocaust industry" to impress on our consciousness. Finkelstein never acknowledges this basic truth. Indeed, the problem with the Holocaust as a memory and a metaphor today is precisely that it is too powerful, an ever-expanding black hole of consciousness that invariably swallows up everything in its path. To millions, it is perhaps the only real contemporary religious event; for hundreds of thousands of Jews, it has served to define their Jewish identity, taking the place of everything else. It is at the heart of many contemporary forms of political correctness, and of many remaining academic and intellectual taboos. Its automatic moral authority is such that it allows charlatans and hucksters to flourish unchallenged. The great importance of Finkelstein's work, flawed though it is, lies in breaking those taboos and exposing the charlatans.

## The Beatific Vision

**The Book of Heaven: An Anthology of Writings from Ancient to Modern Times.** By Carol Zaleski and Philip Zaleski. *Oxford University Press. 448 pp. $30.*

***Reviewed by* Jeffrey Burton Russell**

Heaven is not simply a theological, literary, or artistic phenomenon. It is experiential: in moments of play, of love, of passion, of unity, of selfless giving, of freedom, of being moved by music or art, in our urge to compassion, to surrendering—in all these we sense heaven. Occasionally a joy seizes us by surprise. Once, walking in the Sierra Nevada, I encountered a bush in the midst of which was blooming a Mariposa Lily, an unusual and most beautiful mountain wildflower. It was encased by a web in the form of an almost perfect sphere, and from all over the sphere small drops of dew caught the sunlight. I stood astonished. Christian though I am, what came immediately to mind was the Buddhist exultation: "Hail Thou Jewel in the Lotus." I was often overtaken by a similar joy while immersed in the pages of *The Book of Heaven.*

The Zaleskis, both familiar to First Things readers, realize that no vision of heaven is ever entirely off the mark so long as it is pointed in the direction of beauty, goodness, truth, and love (words that the authors blessedly do not place in ironic quotation marks). Heaven cannot be fully understood by our minds. It can be discarded by clever academics who don't know that they don't understand, but in every culture there are signs to be seen and wise people to point them out. The editors deliberately eschewed exhibits of skepticism, which could have been represented by Mark Twain's terrifyingly nihilist *The Mysterious Stranger.* As they observe, heaven is far richer than its detractors.

All who have eyes to read and heart to ponder will find in this book passages to move them deeply. Who is most stirred and by what depends on the reader's starting point and the stage of his or her journey. With some of these selections we may already be familiar; others we may anticipate; some may seem strange and fail to move us now but will move us later as

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we grow and change. Some favorites we miss—where are Hopkins, Blake, and Herbert? But the editorial task of choosing from among the vast quantity of material was an enormous one, and the Zaleskis have found a balance between exclusiveness and bulk: the book is a very readable four hundred pages.

THE SELECTIONS ARE chosen from Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Native American, and Mazdaist sources, ranging from profound theology to popular hymns. Some are ancient, some contemporary; some elevated, others simple; some are poetry, others prose narrative; some are accounts of personal experience; some are folktales; some are fantasy fiction; others are musical spirituals. All the passages are chosen for their "enduring value and literary merit"—not the words of deconstructionists! The symbols, the metaphors of heaven differ, but they point to a reality. The Zaleskis, as well as the writers they choose, know that heaven is a metaphor, something we can only partly understand; something that at times seizes us, unaware, completely, so that we are "surprised by joy."

The signs of heaven—a bright sunscape, a bird call in the woods, the silence of the peaks, the multi-tone of a creek running in a gorge, the joy of sexual union (appearing particularly in Muslim and Hindu passages)—all these signs, and more, are here. All will of course be disparaged as silly delusions by the reductionists of our day, but thousands of years of experience by billions of people might give the skeptics brief pause. If all ideas are merely the product of chemicals acting in our brain, then it follows that the ideas of the reductionists are as pointless as they claim other ideas to be. Let us start over, allowing human experience to speak again; in this book, it does.

A Tibetan Buddhist speaks of emptiness: "There will appear to you, swifter than lightning, the luminous splendor of the colorless light of Emptiness, and that will surround you on all sides. . . . Try to submerge yourself in that light, giving up all belief in a separate self. . . . Recognize that the boundless Light of this true Reality is your own true self."

The twentieth-century psychologist Carl Jung on his own vision: "It was not a product of imagination. The visions and experiences were utterly real . . . they all had a quality of absolute objectivity."

Of eternity, Saint Augustine says: "'Has ever been' and 'shall be forever' have no place in it, but it simply is, for it is eternal."

Of the perfection of the senses a fifteenth-century Muslim writes: "I experienced such a sweetness, so pleasant a perfume, so delightful a coolness, such a sense of honor . . . that all my terrors melted away and my fears departed from me, so my heart became tranquil."

The Sukhavativyuha Sutra says of the light of the Buddha: "Not only do I praise now his radiant light, but all the buddhas, disciples, and individual buddhas, and the host of all the bodhisattvas also praise it in unison."

The Book of Revelation says of Christ: "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto . . . the Lamb for ever and ever."

The mystical Jewish Hekhalot Rabbati also hints at the glory:

> A quality of Holiness, a quality of power,
> A quality of fearfulness, a quality of sublimity . . .
> Is the quality of . . . JHWH, God of Israel,
> Who comes crowned to the throne of His glory.

How shall the dead see? The Apostle Paul says: "We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

THE WORLDWIDE PRESENCE of such signs or metaphors does not prove the reality of heaven to the ironist and skeptic, but a consideration of them allows one to suggest a natural, nearly universal human wish for the perfection of love and beauty. All live with such a sense of desire (unless it has been snuffed out by wars, famines, plagues, or academic departments), and yet of frustration. For however much we wish to know and love the cosmos, we cannot ever fully understand it; no matter how much we wish to know and love other creatures, we cannot fully understand even those whom we love best; and no matter how much we wish to know

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and love ourselves, we cannot even fully understand ourselves. What purpose would our unsatisfied longing for knowledge, truth, love, beauty, and compassion have were there not something that they point to beyond all the noise of our lives?

All we have, and have surely, are the signs of better worlds, the "intimations of immortality"—as Wordsworth puts it—awe, hope, trust, humility, mindfulness, openness, holy fear, the desire to become what we are meant to be, resurrection, re-creation, new birth—all leading beyond to a reality that is more real than the material reality that we see around us, and infinitely more real than the ironic, postmodern world in which most intellectuals choose to make their dwelling. Demons are there to block the way, some with strange antique names, others with the common names of cynicism and arrogance, where a word such as heaven is a social blunder unless hedged by quotation marks. The contemporary mindset—whether in its materialist reductionist or postmodern cynical varieties—rejects such intimations, but this book might open minds and unfortify hearts. The usual objections will be raised by persons who do not grasp the inner meaning of the subject and choose not to learn about the varieties of human experience.

*The Book of Heaven* begins with a short, sensitive general introduction that briefly presents the historical, religious, and mythic contexts, Eastern and Western, including immortality, resurrection, and rebirth. Short introductions preface each section and there is a brief identification of each exhibit. The sections are arranged neither by religious tradition nor by chronology, but topically: the journey; lands of bliss; the vision of God; the celestial court; heavenly society; heaven on earth; a new heaven and a new earth (projections of heaven on this world in utopian ideas).

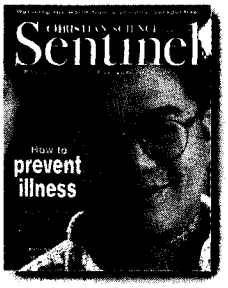
Although this is a florilegium, not a historical or theological treatise, a few ideas might have been developed a bit. There is a strange tension, in Christianity especially, between the concept of an immortal soul and the concept of the resurrection of the body. The Zaleskis address this by speaking of the "recreation of a world, not the reanimation of a corpse," but the problem is much more complicated than that, and one is reminded of "Seven Stanzas at Easter" by John Updike:

> *Make no mistake: if He rose at all*
> *it was as His body;*
> *if the cells' dissolution did not*
> *reverse, the molecules*
> *reknit, the amino acids rekindle*
> *the Church will fall.*

This can be read as either complete denial or complete affirmation of the Bodily Resurrection, but it allows no room for the pointless "resurrection-experience" of unbelieving believers.

Another perennial problem is which metaphors for heavenly time and space are the most likely, or least unlikely, to be apt. One still comes across some variant of the ignorant old canard that no matter how many galaxies you search, you won't find heaven in any of them; and it would have been helpful for the Zaleskis to have replied to this. Another area one wishes they had explored is the related question of tenses: "will we go to heaven" as opposed to "are we in heaven." Also needing some discussion, though distasteful to the democratic worldview, is whether a hierarchy exists in heaven. Almost every tradition throughout the past, and most in the present, affirm that some people are closer to God than others, more or less in the way that Dante described so vividly. Finally, one wishes that the authors had elucidated the dynamic, rather than static, nature of heaven; it is still too common a silli-

"Ideas are the mightiest influence on Earth"
—William E. Channing

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ness to hold that heaven is like an extremely long church service.

The Zaleskis might have shown more of their personal engagement with each passage (and the choice of each exhibit), but they properly decided to put very little spin on the passages and instead let them speak for themselves.

The last word can be left to C. S. Lewis: "Welcome, in the Lion's name. Come further up and further in."

## A Jewish Jesus

**JESUS OF NAZARETH, KING OF THE JEWS: A JEWISH LIFE AND THE EMERGENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.** By PAULA FREDRIKSEN. *Knopf. 320 pp. $26.*

***Reviewed by* Kristen H. Lindbeck**

AMID THE EVER-GROWING number of works on the Jesus of history, there are few if any that combine rich scholarship and graceful style as successfully as this study by Paula Fredriksen, Aurelio Professor of History at Boston University. It will interest general readers as well as scholars and could be used as an excellent, if challenging, introduction to the historical Jesus and the historical criticism of the Gospels.

The author is Jewish, although this will not be immediately obvious to a reader of her book. Historians of Christian background, with comparable goals of historical objectivity, write much as she does about Jesus and earliest Christianity. Fredriksen, for example, accepts as "historical bedrock" the "disciples' conviction they had seen the Risen Christ," appropriately adding that the Resurrection itself is a matter of Christian faith rather than historical fact. Thus in most respects Fredriksen's conclusions are not outstandingly different from those of Christian historians such as Raymond E. Brown and John Meier who strive as she does to understand Jesus within his historical context. Like these scholars, she understands Jesus' teaching of the Kingdom within the context of early Jewish apocalyptic beliefs, but uses this framework to explain an even wider range of data concerning Jesus and the early Jesus movement.

One example is her fresh and persuasive description of how the early proselytizing among the Gentiles is best understood as flowing from Messianic expectation. She reasons that Paul and the other early apostles to the nations must have believed that the Kingdom was coming within their lifetimes (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4 and Mark 13:30). Why else would they have asked Greco-Roman Gentile believers to take on the status of quasi-criminals in a social and religious no man's land—not Jewish but nevertheless bound to refuse to participate in the official cults of their families and cities?

FREDRIKSEN IS ALSO original in her use of Jewish apocalyptic literature to explain how Jesus came to be crucified by Pilate, with "King of the Jews" written over the cross, while his disciples escaped unharmed and later taught freely in the Temple. This particularly needs explanation because Pilate would not have hesitated to slaughter bystanders if he thought it necessary to preserve order (he did so more than once). Fredriksen differs from most scholars (as well as from Matthew and Luke) in rejecting Mark's chronology of Jesus' public ministry in favor of the Gospel of John's story of numerous appearances by Jesus in Jerusalem.

Fredriksen reasons that Jesus, as a believing Jew, made the festival pilgrimage to Jerusalem regularly. Therefore, Pilate and the religious authorities would have already known Jesus and his disciples, and would have understood that they posed no danger to public order *in themselves*, because the apocalyptic message they preached was nonviolent, anticipating God's imminent action. On that particular Passover, however, the crowds began to acclaim Jesus as Messiah, understanding the Messiah, as many did, as a human being who would liberate the Jews from Rome. Pilate's expedient and predictable solution was to remove Jesus' threat to public order in the fastest, cruelest, and most graphic way possible.

I found this historical detective work convincing. At other points, however, I found the way Fredriksen situates Jesus and early Christianity within the Jewish apocalyptic context less satisfying—although I am frankly uncertain whether I am responding

KRISTEN H. LINDBECK *teaches Hebrew Bible and Jewish Studies at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas.*

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as a scholar or as a Christian believer. I was particularly dissatisfied by her argument that the "sheer impracticality" of Jesus' ethic is a product of his apocalyptic convictions, since "no normal society could long run on the principles of the Sermon on the Mount."

There is no doubt that the perfectionist ethics of the Sermon on the Mount have caused centuries of problem and debate within Christian churches and societies—but they also are indispensable to Christianity. Nor is striving for high ethical standards unknown in non-apocalyptic Jewish sources. The Hellenistic Jewish text, *Wisdom of Solomon*, for example, pictures the righteous as gentle and forbearing in the face of persecution by the wicked, reproving but not physically opposing their foes, despite lack of earthly reward for their virtue. Fredriksen also finds Jesus' counsel to turn the other cheek difficult to comprehend outside an apocalyptic framework, but this expression of peaceful resistance to evil must be understood in the context of Jesus' readiness elsewhere to warn sinners and reprove them rather than passively accepting their ill-doing. Jesus expresses anger and moral resistance to wrongdoing, forbidding only violent actions.

This is not to deny Jesus' profound connection with the tradition of Jewish apocalyptic literature. There is no question that Jesus taught that the coming of God's Kingdom was very near at hand. There is a question about how his apocalyptic proclamation should inform our understanding of the rest of his teaching.

Paula Fredriksen and other Jewish historians have a gift to offer Christians, whether scholars or laypeople: a better understanding of Jesus in all his humanity, a full child of his time. For Christians, Jesus is and always will be more than a merely historical figure, but, as Fredriksen reminds us explicitly, he is also that, and readings that isolate him from his historical context are dangerous to truth—and hence to good theology. In the shadow of Christian anti-Semitism, Christians have a particular responsibility to challenge and refute the old anti-Jewish picture of a non-Jewish "Christian" Christ persecuted and killed by Jews. We must also be aware, as Fredriksen warns, of the temptation to use a distorted portrait of a loveless and rigid ancient Jewish establishment as a stand-in for contemporary establishments we may not like. This creates a false dichotomy between a liberal, pacifist, feminist Jesus and a


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reactionary, violent, and patriarchal Judaism, a dichotomy that in turn sets the stage for new and modern anti-Judaism.

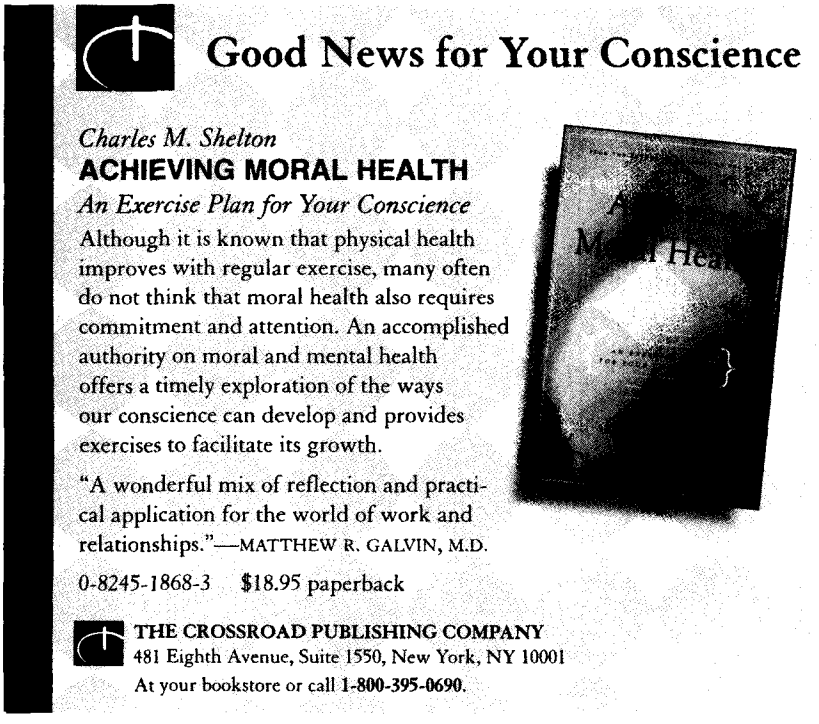
Nevertheless, if some Christian scholars describe Christ as too much the enlightenment liberal or modern revolutionary to possibly have lived in the first century, Paula Fredriksen may go too far in emphasizing how easy it is to explain Jesus' message in its historical context and how comprehensible that message was to his Jewish listeners. Of course, as she stresses, Jesus must have preached in the language of his time, but, like Amos or Jeremiah, he could also be incomprehensible and offensive to many, as the Gospels testify.

This tendency to make Jesus perhaps too much a child of his time, the single drawback of Fredriksen's work, springs from its main virtue: her conscious practice of humane and sensitive historical objectivity. "To do history both honorably and well," she writes, "requires the moral discipline of allowing the gap of twenty centuries to open between us and our ancient subject." This moral discipline informs Fredriksen's effort to present her subjects as persons who loved, aspired, and suffered, rather than as mere ciphers moved by abstract historical or cultural forces. It also gives rise to her insistence that we must respect the "historical integrity and moral autonomy" of Jesus, Paul, and the evangelists as people of their own time and place, concerned with issues (such as purity regulations) that do not concern us, and unaware of our concerns as modern Christians or Jews.

In her effort to present this gap in belief and experience between the time of Jesus and our own time, she includes an unusual element: two passages, five and eight pages long, which don't just describe but re-imagine the historical context of ancient Palestine. The first of these "preludes" is a moving description of the destruction of the Second Temple and the death or enslavement of Jerusalem's people. This, she argues later, is the key event that separates Jesus from us, and from all the New Testament writers but Paul. The second is a description of the boy Jesus making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem with his parents, fascinated and awed by the grandeur of the Temple and its ritual. In this rather charming passage of historical fiction, Fredriksen attempts to present the attractiveness and, one might say, the obviousness, of Jewish law to those who grew up with it.

IN THIS READER'S view, however, Fredriksen presents her view of Jewish law even more successfully in her purely historical passages on Jewish faith. In these passages one can read between the lines Fredriksen's lively appreciation for Judaism in its modern manifestations. She writes of the Sabbath, for example, as a sign of God as universal creator and simultaneously the God of Jewish history, of Abraham and Moses, "concerned with the details of Israel's marital life, with the education of their children, with their just measures and fair law courts." This melding of the universal and particular, of creation and marriage contracts, cosmic redemption and personal justice, is key to most forms of Judaism, then as now. Many Christians tend to view this melding from a respectful anthropological distance, if not with disdain. For Fredriksen it carries religious meaning, and her enthusiasm conveys that meaning to the Christian reader.

Fredriksen's eloquent work shows precisely why it is important that this generation's quest for the historical Jesus is a quest for a *Jewish* Jesus, as emphatically Jewish as Amos and Jeremiah. Although Christian New Testament scholars regard Jesus as savior (or at least founder of our faith) and Jewish New Testament scholars see him as a beloved ancient compatriot (or at least an honestly misguided visionary), they all participate in the quiet miracle of our times. For the first time since the destruction of the Temple, Jews and Christians are working respectfully together to unravel the human mystery behind this Jesus acclaimed as the Christ.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# Sing Unto the Lord

**Jon Vickers: A Hero's Life.** By Jeannie Williams. *Northeastern University Press. 432 pp. $29.95.*

***Reviewed by* Michael Linton**

In opera, it's good to be the tenor. You get the high notes, you get the girl, and you get the big fees. And this has been a half century rich in remarkable tenors. Perhaps there has been no voice so purely beautiful as Luciano Pavarotti's (or as profitable), and probably no singer so broadly musical as Placido Domingo. And the list is longer: Richard Tucker, Peter Schrier, José Carerras, Nicolai Gedda, Giuseppi DiStefano, Alfredo Kraus, James King, Mario Del Monaco, Carlo Bergonzi. Yet for all of these artists' remarkable achievements, few approached the almost volcanic theatrical intensity, and none so eschewed publicity while simultaneously sparking controversy, as the bull-chested Canadian Jon Vickers.

Nothing compared with a Vickers performance. The voice was laser-like; clear, brilliant, ringing, beautiful, but never pretty or tame. His words—in four languages—were honed and wielded like weapons. For him, opera roles were not vehicles for vocal display or even aesthetic gratification. Instead, with Vickers they were avenues of profound illumination. To hear him sing the aria "Great Bear and the Pleiades" from *Peter Grimes*—the text suspended on a single pitch as Benjamin Britten's harmonies spin around it like constellations—was to be taken to some height from which the whole miserable panorama of human suffering was for a moment laid bare to our view. With most singers, and even many great ones, we leave the opera house pleased with a pleasant diversion. But with Vickers, we left thinking that perhaps theater really could change someone's life—perhaps even ours.

Vickers retired from the opera stage in 1987. Fortunately video recordings are available of his signature performances in *Peter Grimes*, Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, Verdi's *Othello*, and Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila*. Now Jeannie Williams has written a biography of the great singer useful not only for its portrait of Vickers and the life behind the opera curtain but also for the way it demonstrates—despite Williams' clear affection for her subject—how Christians and Christian issues are becoming increasingly exotic to the chatty class.

Vickers was born in 1926 in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, the sixth in a family of eight children. His father was a grammar school principal, amateur musician, and lay preacher of apparently unusually ecumenical tastes. (Although a Baptist, he served as an interim preacher for the local Presbyterians and evangelized with the Salvation Army, the Plymouth Brethren, and the United Church.) The whole family was musical, and it wasn't unusual for Vickers' father to take the family along to provide music for his services.

Until he was eighteen, Vickers spent summers working on a neighbor's farm, developing the burly physique for which he later would be famous. (He was fond of picking up sopranos—usually no small objects in the opera world—and holding them over his head.) Vickers hoped to go to college and study medicine, but with college vacancies filled by war veterans, he opted to go into retail. He worked for Safeway and Woolworth's but continued to sing in church choirs and amateur theatricals. While working in Winnipeg he was awarded a scholarship to study opera at Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music, where he enrolled in the fall of 1950.

Vickers impressed the faculty by his concentration, one teacher later recalling that he was like a "piece of blotting paper," soaking up everything in its path. But music wasn't the only thing commanding his attention. While at the conservatory he met Henrietta Outerbridge. Born in China to missionary parents (her

Michael Linton *is head of the Division of Music Theory and Composition at Middle Tennessee State University.*


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father was a University of Chicago Ph.D. botanist and theologian), Henrietta was in Toronto teaching high school when she met the tenor. They were married in the summer of 1953. Their marriage, which produced five children, ended thirty-eight years later when Henrietta died after an extended fight with cancer. The soprano Teresa Stratas, who was at the conservatory with Vickers and knew them both well, characterized their relationship as "one of the great love stories of our time."

In 1957 Vickers joined London's Covent Garden Opera. He debuted as King Gustavus in Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* and when the company presented the first uncut staging of Berlioz's masterpiece *Les Troyens*, Vickers received international accolades for his performances of Aeneas. The next year he went to Bayreuth to sing Siegmund in Wagner's *Die Walküre*. In 1960 he joined the Metropolitan Opera (singing that season the roles of Canio, Florestan, Siegmund, and Don José). In 1967 he first sang the role of Peter Grimes under Colin Davis in New York and soon after that became a prominent feature of Herbert von Karajan's opera performances in the Saltzburg festivals. By 1970 Vickers had established an unrivaled reputation as a singer of dazzling nuance, equally able to deliver ethereal pianissimos and steely fortes, sophisticated interpretation, and high musical sensitivity. His 1971 season testified to the demand in which he was held: he sang six major roles in the German, French, Italian, and English repertories for sixteen performances in New York, ten in London, nine in Saltzburg, and six each in Dallas and Buenos Aires.

Vickers' reputation was not only musical; he was becoming known in some circles as "difficult." Since Vickers usually arrived at rehearsals with not only his own part memorized but the rest of the cast's as well, he had little patience for underprepared colleagues and was known to walk out of a rehearsal if he felt the rest of the cast had not prepared to his standards. He demanded, and received, handsome fees for his engagements. He fought with tax men on three continents, and finally settled in his wife's ancestral home of Bermuda because of its tax policies.

But Vickers was no prima donna. There were reasons for his actions beyond a tenor's conceit. He was a businessman, after all. He had a wife and five children to clothe and feed, and he realized that his voice was his one marketable asset. If he squeezed managers for fees higher than they might have been willing initially to give, it was because he knew no one came to the opera to hear *them*.

But while singing was the way he provided for his family, it wasn't the reason Vickers performed. Back in Saskatchewan, Vickers' father had taught him to do everything for the glory of God—and therefore to do it well. That lesson stayed with him in the opera house. Although he hated publicity and avoided it whenever possible, Vickers nonetheless publicly described himself as a "committed Christian." For him, singing was a way of glorifying God by serving others. Upon his retirement he said:

> My whole life has been one reflecting the necessity of serving. That is the greatest source of happiness, the greatest sense of fulfillment. And it is of course the essence of the Christian faith. . . . But there are too many people who say, when one talks of being an instrument, that one thinks one has a private pipeline to God. Nature has equipped me with a certain talent, and it is my responsibility to use it for something that is uplifting, that


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will enhance and embellish the lives of people who also have been given something in that they can even receive it.

The idea that his singing was something entrusted to him by God for "uplifting" others was the foundation of his musical life. It was business, yes, but business of the eternal variety.

In 1977 just what that business meant to Vickers was seriously questioned. One month before its first performance, Vickers withdrew from a production of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* that London's Covent Garden Opera had mounted in his honor. The tenor said that he had found the role of Wagner's knight "blasphemous," and thus wouldn't sing it. Not since the Presbyterian sprinter Eric Liddell refused to compete on a Sunday in the 1924 Paris Olympics had the collision of religious conviction with professional obligation sparked such fireworks.

Vickers had never performed the roll of Tannhäuser. In September of 1974 Covent Garden started talking to him about the possibility of presenting his first performances in the role, and a contract between them for the part was signed that December for a production in 1977. In early 1976 New York's Metropolitan Opera negotiated a contract with Vickers in which he agreed to sing eight performances of the opera in the Met's 1977-78 season. Vickers began learning the role, but became increasingly uncomfortable with its character. In November of 1976 he called his manager to tell him that he found the role offensive on religious grounds and that he would have to cancel. London pressed Vickers to reconsider, but the tenor stuck to his decision, and one month before the production was to open, Covent Garden publicly announced Vickers' cancellation and the Met quickly followed suit. Vickers would not sing Tannhäuser because he found the role contradicted his Christian beliefs.

Reaction was immediate and noisy. For many, the notion that religious views (of any sort) might influence a singer's choice of roles was incomprehensible. Since the role of Tannhäuser is widely considered to be perhaps the most difficult in the repertory, it was generally assumed that Vickers found he couldn't sing it, was too proud to admit it, and used the religious argument as an excuse for canceling. Besides, if the role was so objectionable, why did it take the tenor so long to notice, and why weren't some of the other roles he sang equally problemat-


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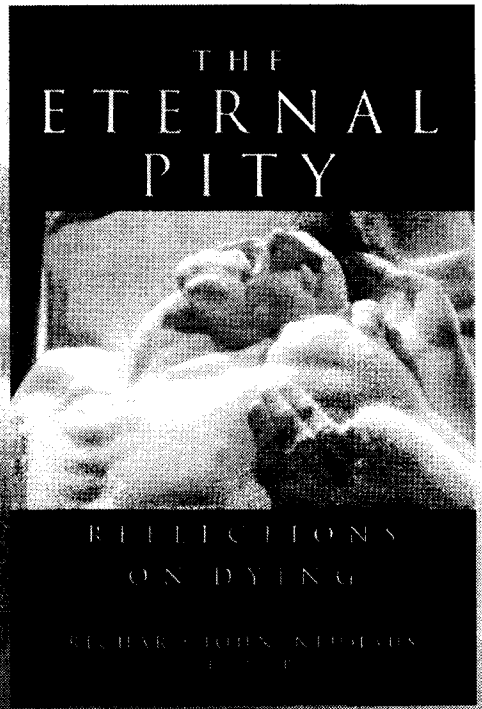


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ic? Even some of Vickers' supporters were skeptical, one suggesting that the most charitable interpretation was that, upon studying the role, the tenor must have been unable to connect with it in the way necessary for his best performances. Some thought the tenor was a bit unbalanced. Yet throughout it all Vickers remained adamant. The role was "blasphemous" and he wouldn't sing it. It had nothing to do with the notes, but with the words and the story.

WAGNER'S OPERA is a calculated study in opposites. The drama itself is a mix of elements the composer drew from the traditions of German romantic opera and its opposing tradition of Franco-Italian opera. The goddess Venus, with whom Wagner associates the key of E Major, is the mirror of the maiden Elisabeth, with whom Wagner associates E flat Major. Most importantly, the title role of Tannhäuser, a medieval knight, shows a man torn by opposing desires whose tragedy lies in his inability to integrate the sensual and spiritual sides of his character. Desiring both Venus and Elisabeth, he is unable to have either and finds redemption only in death.

Although the sophistication with which Wagner plots out this conflict exists on many levels, it can perhaps be seen best in his treatment of the famous "hymn to Venus" that Tannhäuser introduces in the first act. In a series of dialogues with Venus, the composer has the tenor sing the aria first in D flat, then in D, and finally in E flat. With each modulation Wagner purposely strains the tenor's voice more, the growing physical strain of the music conveying the emotional conflict within the character: although praising the goddess with his lips, his heart, or at least part of his heart, lies elsewhere. This "elsewhere" Wagner finally emphasizes in the hymn's third presentation. Although addressed to Venus, it is not in her key, E major, but is instead ironically in the key of Elisabeth, E flat. And to drive home his point, in Act II when Tannhäuser passionately breaks into the hymn again as part of the singing contest to win Elisabeth's hand, Wagner sets it in E Major—Tannhäuser sings to Elisabeth in the key of Venus.

As the story proceeds, and as Tannhäuser is increasingly confronted with the warring sides of his character, Wagner writes the role so that the voice itself increasingly shows the deepening psychological strain that the knight suffers. In the third act Wagner intentionally positions Tannhäuser's line so that the singer is forced constantly to negotiate the voice's literal "break" (that spot where the tenor voice naturally shifts from high to low register). The knight's torture at being torn between the erotic and religious realms is here shown by the physical strain upon the singer. Here, as in everything in Wagner's work, the music illuminates character.

The notion that Vickers backed out of his engagement because he couldn't sing the role is based upon the unfortunate, if widespread, misunderstanding of the part as basically a work of heightened *bel canto*. It isn't. Though Wagner was not interested in ugly singing, *Tannhäuser* isn't a work about pretty singing either. It is an opera about the fundamental duplicity of the human character; to depict this, Wagner puts the tenor's voice under the utmost stress to portray Tannhäuser's disjointed psychology. It very well might have been the case that Vickers' instrument would have cracked by the third act, but that was Wagner's point, a point that Vickers certainly understood (while many musicians do not)—and one he would have managed with great dramatic skill.

Since it probably wasn't the technical difficulties of the role that bothered Vickers, is it possible to take him

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on his word that he found the role objectionable for theological reasons? Although the medieval story has the contours of a Christian morality play, its theology would be thoroughly repugnant to many Protestants. The Marian theology (especially Wagner's suggested conflation of the goddess Venus with Mary), the knight asking for absolution from the pope, the theme of "works righteousness," the notion that Tannhäuser is saved by Elisabeth who both sacrifices herself for him on this earth and then in the afterlife intercedes before God on his behalf, and the fact that Tannhäuser himself is redeemed only to die—all these are, to the conservative Protestant at least, distortions of Christianity.

So one can see why Vickers would have nothing to do with the part. As he said in 1986, "I'm a committed Christian. *Tannhäuser* is, I think, an attempt to strike at the very root of the Christian faith." As to the other "questionable" Wagnerian roles that the tenor sang, the objections ring a bit hollow. Yes, Siegmund and Sieglinde are lovers, siblings, and adulterers, but Sieglinde's marriage is one based on rape and the lovers' incest hardly involves the betrayal of trust since they were separated at birth. *Tristan* is ultimately not so much an opera about a love triangle as it is about redemption through the miracle of forgiveness. And even *Parsifal*, problematic though it is, is not as obviously objectionable as *Tannhäuser*.

None of this analysis is presented in Williams' treatment of the *Tannhäuser* scandal. She appears tone deaf to Vickers' Christianity. The *Tannhäuser* incident is the most glaring example of this, but not the only one. Elsewhere in the book, Williams attributes Vickers' antipathy toward homosexuality—something that needs no explanation for an orthodox Christian—to potentially unaddressed issues in his own psychology. Even the fact that Henrietta's bridal bouquet included a small Bible Williams mentions as if it were some bizarre tribal practice from a lost continent.

And this is what I mean by this book exemplifying the increasing exoticism of Christianity to the chatty class. There was a time when the Manhattan intellectual and the run of the mill Staten Island evangelical shared a broad common culture, at least in the sense that neither had to be told what was important to the other. It is becoming increasingly clear that this is no longer the case. Williams is a staff columnist for *USA Today* and has written widely on the world of opera.


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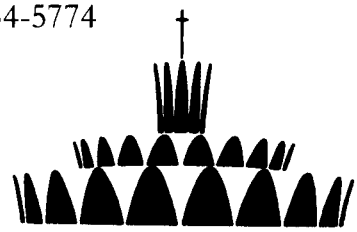


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But while she gives a lively account of the gossipy swamp of the opera house, she fails to give her reader a sense of Vickers' Christian world.

The *Tannhäuser* affair did not damage Vickers' career, although it did set him apart from his colleagues as an eccentric. In 1986, the Met paid him the greatest compliment the company could bestow on a singer by mounting a production of Handel's *Samson* in his honor. As Henrietta's cancer worsened, he curtailed his performing to remain with her in Bermuda. She died in 1991. He remarried several years later and lives a quiet retirement in Bermuda.

It is a remarkable life, and indeed perhaps even a heroic one. Vickers deserves a much more thoughtful analysis than the expanded *People* magazine kind of biography Williams presents here. It's too bad. She clearly admires Vickers and has done a lot of work plotting out his career. But in the end, she simply does not understand her subject.

## Law's Labors Lost

**WE THE PEOPLE: THE FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT AND THE SUPREME COURT.** By MICHAEL J. PERRY. *Oxford University Press. 275 pp. $35.*

***Reviewed by* Hadley Arkes**

THAT REDOUBTABLE CREW, the writers who brought forth the symposium "The End of Democracy? The Judicial Usurpation of Politics" (FT, November 1996), have apparently contributed to our raging economy. For the symposium has led to further rounds of meetings and essays, and now, *We the People: The Fourteenth Amendment and the Supreme Court*, a scholarly monograph from the pen of Professor Michael Perry of the law school at Wake Forest.

The charges of "judicial usurpation" spring from decisions of the Supreme Court that have agitated our politics over the past fifty years. Those decisions stirred controversy precisely because they touched issues of moral consequence—not only on race and segregation, but on the very matrix of the law, dealing with life, death, and sexuality: abortion, assisted suicide, gay rights. In these cases, the Court proclaimed new rights arising from the logic of the Constitution, and then in the name of the Constitution swept away the laws in the states that stood as barriers to these rights.

The principal novelty that Perry has evidently meant to deliver with his book may be stated in this way: the conservatives are partially right—there is in fact serious judicial usurpation—but the conservatives themselves are guilty of the same vice through their willingness to use the courts to resist policies of affirmative action. Before he sets himself to the task of estimating the work of the symposiasts, Perry seeks to set forth a constitutional theory of the Fourteenth Amendment, the vehicle for judicial usurpation and hence the key to the issue. The central thread running through Perry's analysis is a concern for discrimination, for treating people unequally, dismissively, in a manner that virtually denies their dignity or standing as full human beings.

THE FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT was the centerpiece of the Civil War Amendments, designed to secure the rights of black people newly removed from slavery. The Amendment was addressed to the action of states ("No State shall . . ."), and it would work mainly to secure those rights against the force of hostile governments in the South. By placing those new rights in the Constitution, the

HADLEY ARKES *is the Ney Professor of American Institutions at Amherst College and a Visiting Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.*

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framers sought to put these protections of the law beyond the reach of ordinary majorities in Congress, majorities shifting with the political seasons. These concerns of the Amendment found expression in such formulas as the equal protection of the laws or the due process of law. These were grand formulas of justice that could not be confined to black people, as was well understood at the time. The Amendment was inspired by the need to protect black people, but its formulas of justice had to move well beyond blacks. The Amendment did not create special rights for black people; rather, as Harry Jaffa has pointed out, it secured for black people the "natural rights" that would flow properly for any human beings.

That is not an argument that sits easily with Perry, and yet the issue is bound up in the deepest weave of his argument. Perry recognizes that this sense of the innate equality of human beings finds its origin in a religious understanding that humans were made in the image of something higher: "The proposition that all human beings are sacred (inviolable, etc.) is, for many persons, a religiously based tenet," he writes. In the spirit of modern liberalism he forgoes that line of explanation as no longer fit for a society divided in its religious understandings. But tellingly, he finds no alternative grounding for his belief that all people have equal and infinite moral worth other than that "many persons who are not religious believers embrace the proposition" that they have such worth. After all of Perry's embroidery, after all his labored efforts to construct a theory, all of this simply reduces, at the root, to *positivism*: whether something is right or wrong finally depends on whether "many people" or a majority have come to posit or "embrace" it. Perry has made the most earnest effort, in good will, to think through these vexing questions of the law, but everything he does is finally filtered through the prism of moral and legal positivism.

The very terms of the problem, then, are translated, reduced, purged of their moral substance, so that they produce this curious result: Perry's argument with the symposiasts in FIRST THINGS utterly dissolves, for the problems he uncovers in their argument are problems for him, not for them. They are problems, that is, borne of a positivism that most of the symposiasts do not share, for they are adherents to natural law. Not only do they evade the defects that become crippling for Perry, but they can


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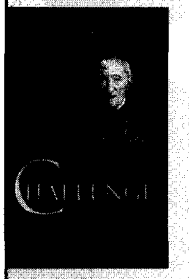

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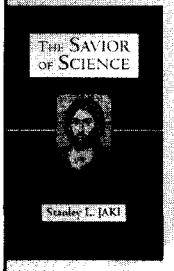


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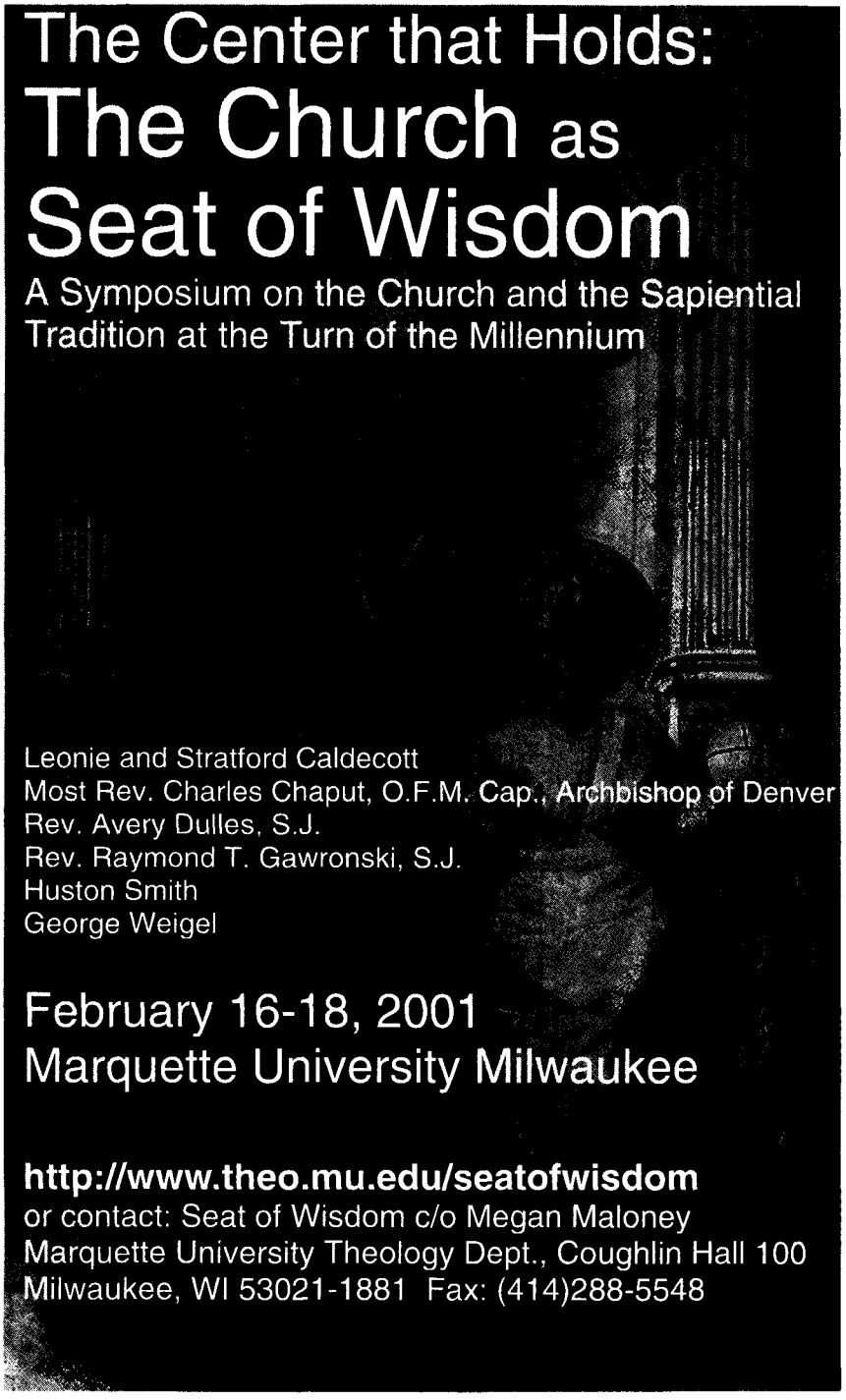
speak, in a more natural language, of injuries and victims, of rights and wrongs, that are mainly screened from view in the concepts employed by Perry.

TAKE THE MATTER of affirmative action. Perry spends much of this book trying to catch the symposiasts in a revealing contradiction over that issue. When it comes to abortion and gay rights, Perry notes, the symposiasts complain about the substance of the decisions and the arrogance of the judges in removing these issues from the domain of politics, where they may be subject to the deliberation, or the moral reasoning, of ordinary citizens. But, he announces with relish, the symposiasts register no such concern for the trend of decisions, spurred on by conservative judges, striking down schemes of affirmative action.

But return for the moment to the view held by the symposiasts: that assignments of benefits and disabilities based on race are in principle wrong; that they cannot be reconciled with any coherent notion of "law." A court that struck down policies of that kind would not be condemned by the symposiasts as engaged in "usurpation." Two of the symposiasts—namely, Robert George and I—have made a point of arguing that courts should be free to act vigorously as courts in articulating the principles of our law. But at the same time, we hold to the Lincolnian view that the political branches should be free, in a comparable way, to act as interpreters of the Constitution, and to resist the judgments of the courts if they find them to be radically unpersuasive.

From this perspective, the President and Congress would be obliged to respect the decisions of the courts as they bore on the litigants involved in the case. But they would not be persuaded, say, to accept the principle of the Dred Scott case if they judged that principle to be wrong. Perry, curiously, cites Lincoln, but without bothering to recall the perspective that Lincoln represented so powerfully on this problem. If he had, he would have relieved at once the puzzlement he expresses as to what, exactly, the symposiasts would put in place as a remedy to judicial usurpation.

With affirmative action, has it not made the most profound difference that the policy seeks its end through a system of racial spoils that sets one race or ethnic group against others; a system that is utterly incompatible at the root with the principle on which the Civil Rights Act of 1964 would be justified? The liberal managers of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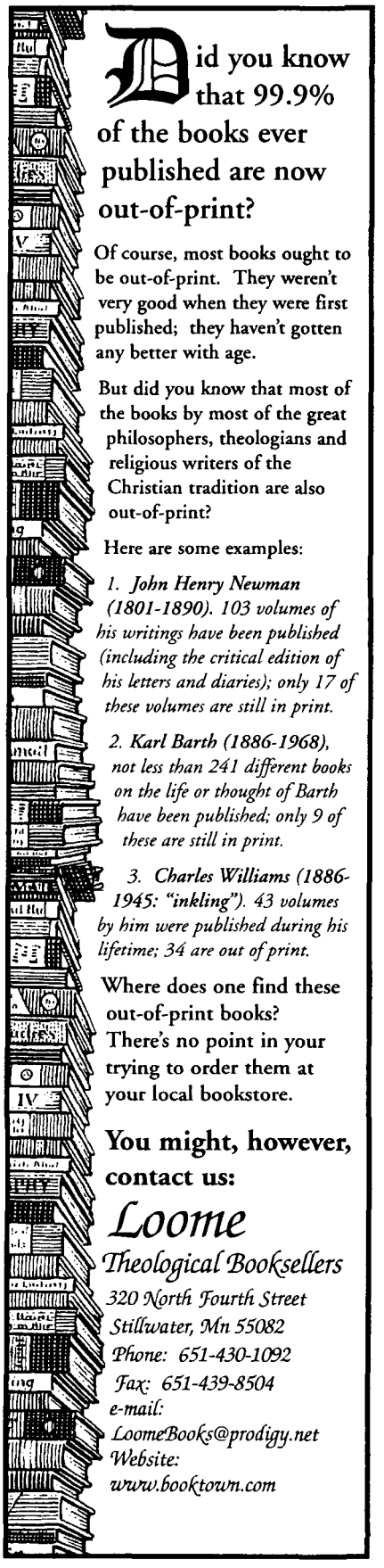
that bill—men like Hubert Humphrey and Joseph Clark—insisted to their colleagues that the bill would never justify any such system of racial preferences. If anything is clear from the record, it is that the Civil Rights Act would never have passed if it were understood to mandate or even allow the schemes of racial preferences that have become fixtures in the landscape. Beyond that, it is clear from referenda in California and other places that the American people, when given the chance to vote, still reaffirm the principle of racial blindness and reject the scheme of racial preferences. When that evidence is assembled, it is clear that in requiring the policies of affirmative action the judiciary has displaced the judgment of the people, while the people, on their part, have preserved an attachment to the principles of lawfulness.

It would seem then that Perry has it exactly backwards: on affirmative action the judicial usurpation is not on the side of Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, who have held to the original principle. Their resistance to the schemes of racial preference marks a defense of the deeper principles of the Constitution—and even, contra Perry, the settled judgments of "We the People."

But that understanding of deeper principle is absent from Perry's account. When he needs to explain then just how "the People" might be mistaken and wrong, his inclination is to solve the problem in positivist terms: the policies ordained by "We the People" may be in conflict with other understandings, long settled, to form a new "bedrock" of constitutional opinion. That notion of a "bedrock" is persistently and pervasively invoked to explain why even faulty judgments, settled over time, become authoritative. But Perry surely realizes that, at the time of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, the prevailing custom largely supported racial segregation. It was part of the "bedrock," we might say, as is the aversion to homosexuality, another "bedrock" that Perry would supersede on behalf of a new, improved sensibility. The gauging of bedrocks seems to be, in the end, nothing more than a reckoning of whether opinion has congealed. When Perry wants to override the bedrock of the moment, he appeals to a principle of "human dignity." Yet even that standard, he admits, does not rest on any principle or truth. It seems to depend, rather, on the "consensus" of opinion that may have taken hold, say, in the law reviews, or in the circles of people who write on the subject.

Perry makes his most notable break with his liberal colleagues on the matter of abortion, but due to its poor foundations this conviction begins to crack—and then crumble. In good positivist form he credits the opinions of the voters when they regard unborn children as human beings, worthy of protection. But he is willing to offset that point and admit certain rights of abortion if there is a keen sense of the burdens borne by women and if the social "costs" of restricting abortion might override the benefits. The utilitarian calculus becomes rather bizarre, however, if one takes seriously the notion that one is dealing with an innocent human life. What "costs," in cash or convenience, would be accepted in other instances as a justification for taking an innocent human life?

With the same curious detachment, Perry assumes that exceptions for rape and incest are the marks of a more defensible policy in restricting abortion. As a matter of prudence, that compromise may be necessary, but how could it be endorsed *in principle* without impairing the coherence of the underlying policy? Even with all of the utilitarian razzamatazz, Perry does not seem to doubt that the unborn child is anything other than human and innocent of wrongdoing. If so, how could anything in that state of affairs be altered by the fact that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the child was conceived in wrongful acts? Does the child bear any responsibility for these wrongs?

Even were we to grant Perry his conservative judicial usurpation, it curiously diverts attention from the scale, or consequence, of the judicial usurpation that he concedes in other domains. He tells us that *Roe v. Wade* was a signal instance of judicial usurpation, acknowledged even by liberals such as Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Archibald Cox. In the face of both science and the settled opinions of "We the People," the Supreme Court removed the protections of the law from a whole class of human beings. Perry also concedes that there is, in the highest reaches of the academy, a whole corps of people who have cultivated the deepest stake in supporting and even advancing this jurisprudence of abortion. If this style of law represents judicial usurpation, apparently there is a formidable section of the political class, rich in resources and influence, that has been able to sustain this scheme of usurpation.

But that is not the main message that Perry in his final moments brings home to his readers. He emphasizes rather the hypocrisy of conservatives in railing against the powers of the Court but being all too willing to use those powers in resisting affirmative action. And yet the usurpation Perry has identified on the matter of abortion is attended with casualties that must be regarded as massive in any scale of measurement. Since the Court installed a regime of abortion on demand, there have been around thirty to forty million abortions, by a conservative estimate. If Perry takes seriously the notion that these numbers measure the destruction of human beings, how can he look up from the figures and notice, not the deaths from abortion, but the contradictions he affects to see on affirmative action? Has he not in fact found judicial usurpation coupled with massive acts of killing? Has he not in fact confirmed the presence of judicial usurpation at a level of moral consequence that must be jolting to anyone of normal sensibility? And when the abuse of power has been associated in other settings with the destruction of innocent life on such a vast scale, has it not usually raised the most searching questions about the state of the regime?

At a certain point, one must wonder: Does a fixation on the scales of utility, or the formulas of positivism, tend to cut off the writer from a more "natural" understanding, accessible to ordinary folk? Burdened with the language of the law reviews, does the writer have more trouble seeing the real victims before him than people with less "theory"? Perry has sought a more "nuanced" treatment of the subject, but the nuances, when collected, yield a rather sobering judgment. Michael Perry is a reflective man, and he is no doubt representative of the commentators now writing in the schools of law. And as he tries to address, through the law, questions of moral consequence, we may indeed see the furnishings of mind that prevail in the schools of law and shape the character of our judges.


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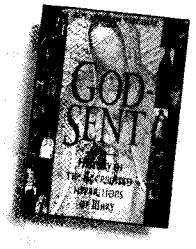


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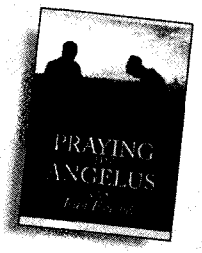


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## BRIEFLY NOTED

**DEUS TRINITAS: THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRIUNE GOD.** By DAVID COFFEY. *Oxford University Press. 196 pp. $35.*

The many books written on the Trinity in the last two decades or so generally assume the following: that at least in the West, the Trinity has suffered disastrous neglect in Christian theology; that a plausible trinitarian theology has to start with the "economic" Trinity (roughly, God as He acts in the history of salvation) rather than the "immanent" Trinity (roughly, God apart from the history of salvation); that the chief problem of trinitarian theology is the relationship between the immanent and the economic Trinity, which must be distinguished from one another in some fashion, but then identified with each other (usually with qualifications); that a satisfactory concept of "person" is both elusive and indispensable for trinitari-

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an theology; and that help with all these problems is more likely to be found in the Eastern than in the Western Christian tradition. David Coffey, an Australian Catholic theologian now at Marquette University, firmly embraces this research program, though he advocates moderate rather than radical versions of its various assumptions. Naturally he also aims to advance the program, especially by proposing a "return model" of the Trinity to complement the more traditional "procession model." On this view the Father's gift of the Holy Spirit to Jesus, appropriated by Jesus with increasing intensity up to the climactic point of his passion and death, perfectly manifests in time the Father's eternal gift of the Spirit to the Son, fully returned by the Son; this mutual gift of personal love is the very life of the triune God. Coffey wants to think about the Trinity in a way that avoids shortchanging the Holy Spirit, but even readers quite committed to this aim may be dissatisfied with his reduction of Jesus' saving significance to the disclosure of a trinitarian pattern of love and faithfulness, which the Spirit enables us to imitate and share. Readers unused to contemporary trinitarian theology may find this book hard going, though it is more lucid than many examples of the genre. Initiates will surely find it thought-provoking, whether they share the current trinitarian agenda or belong to the growing number who think that trinitarian theology would be better off without much of the research program to which Coffey is so clearly committed.

*— Bruce D. Marshall*

**The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity.** Edited by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, S.J., and Gerald O'Collins, S.J. *Oxford University Press. 393 pp. $39.95.*

This worthwhile collection, the outcome of a "Trinity Summit" held in New York at Easter 1998, differs from standard current books on the Trinity (see previous review) in two ways. First, it broaches issues usually left aside in trinitarian theology. Thus David Brown offers an illuminating and theologically interesting analysis of the Trinity in art, and Marguerite Shuster a sobering account of the fate of the Trinity in (mostly Protestant) preaching, which concludes with a ringing call for a return to doctrinal preaching. And the book also offers a deliberately wide array of approaches to trinitarian issues, including not only historical and sys-

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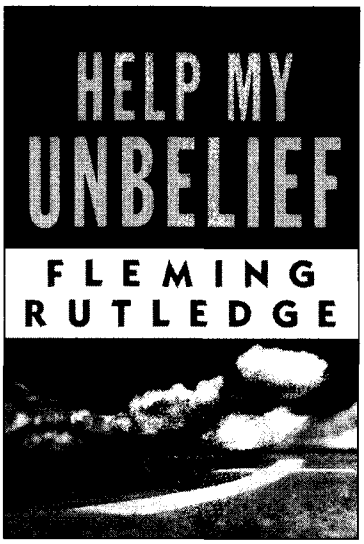


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tematic theologians, but biblical scholars and analytic philosophers of religion, writing from a variety of theological and communal points of view—Roman Catholic, Protestant, and, in one case, Jewish (the New Testament scholar Alan Segal, who contributes an instructive if somewhat technical chapter on the role of conflicts between Jews and Christians in the emergence of early trinitarian teaching). At some points this book also challenges the standard research program of current trinitarian theology. In particular Michel Barnes argues against readings of Augustine which, on account of Augustine's alleged reliance on Neoplatonism, hold him responsible for a supposedly chronic trinitarian deficit in Western theology, only just now made good. Sarah Coakley and Brian Leftow argue against "social" trinitarianism, the former on historical and the latter on conceptual grounds. They say little, though, about the biblical and liturgical considerations that often incline people towards one or another social view of the Trinity, and they consider only the stringent versions of social trinitarianism maintained by some analytic philosophers of religion, leaving aside the muddier, but perhaps more viable, types advanced by systematic theologians. Inevitably in such a wide-ranging collection, there are many loose ends, despite the efforts of the editors to bring unity to the whole. And while a remarkable amount of ground is covered, the vast tradition of Scholastic reflection on the Trinity, modern and baroque as well as medieval, is barely touched. In this the book does stick closely to the standard trinitarian agenda. Yet even a modest familiarity with the Scholastic tradition may lead one to wonder how many of the proposals offered as needed trinitarian novelties, here and elsewhere, have already been scrutinized, and perhaps found wanting, by the long departed inhabitants of that mostly uncharted land.

*— BDM*

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**THE DEATH OF CHARACTER: MORAL EDUCATION IN AN AGE WITHOUT GOOD OR EVIL.** By JAMES DAVISON HUNTER. *Basic. 314 pp. $26.*

The distinguished sociologist of the University of Virginia and author of the acclaimed *Culture Wars* here undertakes a close examination of what, in theory and practice, "moral education" means in most American schools. His argument, part of which appeared in these pages ("Leading Children Beyond Good and Evil," May 2000), is that moral education as presently conceived almost inevitably ends up by thinning out moral content, removing the sharp edges of judgment, avoiding normative traditions of moral experience, and thus stifling the factors most crucial to the formation of character. The book is strengthened by its sympathetic reading of the history of moral education, and the demonstration of why so many good intentions have gone awry. Hunter has proposals to make, some of which are surely debatable, but his great contribution is to demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that moral education cannot be renewed without reintroducing the truth about good and evil, and he shows how we might go about doing that. A book that should be of very special interest to parents and educators.

**THE SILENT REVOLUTION AND THE MAKING OF VICTORIAN ENGLAND.** By HERBERT SCHLOSSBERG. *Ohio State University Press. 403 pp. $26.95.*

Between the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, France and other countries of Europe were convulsed by violent revolutions. By way of sharp contrast, the author convincingly argues, a "silent revolution" of religious and cultural renewal was at the same time happening in Victorian England. Schlossberg describes in fascinating detail the impact of the evangelical awakening on politics, economics, and everyday mores, underscoring that the spiritual and cultural dynamics in play cannot be explained, or at least cannot be explained persuasively, by reference to the presumably "larger" social forces favored by many historians. An important study in religion and public life, which formed the basis of the article "How Great Awakenings Happen" in our October 2000 issue.

**THE COURAGE TO BE.** By PAUL TILLICH. *Yale University Press. 214 pp. $12.95 paper.*

"The courage to be is rooted in the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt."

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To many thousands of readers that was a spiritually liberating message when this book was first published in 1952. The New York Public Library lists it as one of the "Books of the Century." This second edition, with an introduction by Harvard's Peter J. Gomes, will undoubtedly gain it a new readership. Tillich, who died in 1965, possessed a rhetorical genius in addressing Schleiermacher's "cultured despisers of religion," but, as a serious theologian, his work has not worn well. His proposed "correlation" between man's questions and religion's answers (which may sometimes, somehow, be God's answers) usually ends up with the questions trumping the answers. *The Courage to Be* will be enjoyed by many for its spiritual and rhetorical excitements but, divorced from the truth claims, worship, and life of the continuing community of faith, such excitements are but another option on offer in the marketplace of modern spiritualities.

**The Surprising Pope: Understanding the Thought of John Paul II.** By Maciej Zieba, O.P. *Lexington. 208 pp. $70 cloth, $24.95 paper.*

For many readers, this will be a surprising book. Father Zieba, recently elected provincial of the Dominicans in Poland, is a careful student of John Paul II's writings and a close friend of their author. In a marvelously accessible manner, he here responds to questions on everything from the Pope's role in the end of communism to his teachings on human sexuality and the nature of democracy. What comes through strongly and convincingly in these pages is the sense that this pontificate holds the promise of a "new springtime" for the Church and the world. Fr. Avery Dulles calls it John Paul's "prophetic humanism," and Fr. Zieba offers a bracing introduction to both the prophetic and humanistic aspects of the Pope's proposal, and does so within a comprehensive understanding of the culture and history of the West (of which, Fr. Zieba insists, Poland is very much part). Introduction by Michael Novak. *The Surprising Pope* is warmly recommended.

**Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality.** By Clifford J. Green. *Eerdmans. 392 pp. $28 paper.*

A revised edition of one of the most important works on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's early life and writings, with a suggestive effort to reconstruct from his unfinished *Ethics* his justification for joining the resistance effort to kill Hitler. A necessary book for students of one of the most compelling theological and moral figures of the twentieth century.

**Christian Perspectives on Politics.** By J. Philip Wogaman. *Westminster/John Knox. 374 pp. $29.95 paper.*

A revised and expanded version of a textbook designed for mainline Protestant seminaries and colleges. Wogaman, who taught ethics at Wesley Theological Seminary for many years and is now pastor of Foundry Methodist Church in Washington, D.C., tries to be fair to positions deviating from his distinctly leftist views. The book carries warm recommendations from Father Charles Curran, George McGovern, and Bishop Walter Sullivan of the Diocese of Richmond.

**The Honor of My Brothers: A Brief History of the Relationship Between the Pope and the Bishops.** By William Henn. *Herder and Herder. 168 pp. $17.95 paper.*

An admirably concise and balanced overview by a professor at the Gregorian University in Rome. Father Henn's study will please neither papal centralists nor progressive decentralists, but it puts into solid historical and theological context the collegiality between Peter and his brothers mandated by the Second Vatican Council and necessary to the flourishing of the universal Church.

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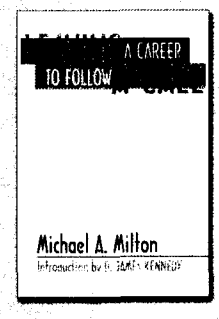


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**What Makes Charity Work? A Century of Public and Private Philanthropy.** Edited by Myron Magnet. *Ivan R. Dee. 233 pp. $24.95.*

Although the jargon is new, the role of "faith-based" institutions in meeting human needs has a long history, as is admirably demonstrated by these essays from *City Journal.* Who knows? We may even rehabilitate the term "charity," which is, after all, simply another word for love, without which nothing works.

**Servants of the Gospel.** Edited by Leon J. Suprenant. *Emmaus Road. 83 pp. $6.95 paper.*

Bracing statements by nine Catholic bishops on what it means to be a bishop. The essays were originally published in *Lay Witness,* the publication of Catholics United for the Faith, in anticipation of a forthcoming Synod of Bishops. Authors include Francis George, Charles Chaput, James Keleher, and Fabian Bruskewitz.

**Pope Pius XII: Architect for Peace.** By Margherita Marchione. *Paulist. 345 pp. $22.95 paper.*

As the title suggests, the author strongly defends the World War II pontiff against the numerous charges that began with Rolf Hochhuth's 1963 dramatic smear, *The Deputy,* and have in some quarters escalated ever since. As valuable as is her argument, more valuable is the ample presentation of primary evidence from newspapers and Jewish organizations at the time, as well as many pages reproducing exchanges between the Pope and various Catholic officials and governments, including the U.S. Pius XII may not have been as heroic as the author contends, but nobody can read the evidence she presents and give the slightest credence to the attacks of John Cornwell, Garry Wills, and numerous others. The book can be read as extended supportive documentation for Michael Novak's "Pius XII as Scapegoat" in the August/September issue.

**The Heretic.** By Lewis Weinstein. *Goodnewfiction.com. 378 pp. $24.95.*

A novel of generations of *conversos*—Jews who converted to Christianity—during the years leading up to the Spanish Inquisition. The story reflects the conflicted motives that led churchmen to cooperate with the royal effort to "purify" the Spanish nation, vividly dramatizing the sins that John Paul II has asked Christians to candidly acknowledge. *The Heretic* is a valuable contribution to understanding a tragedy too often debated in the mire of accusation and defensiveness.

**The Making of the Pope of the Millennium: Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyla.** Edited by Adam Boniecki. *Marian Press. 938 pp. $45.*

A day by day account, with many documents and photographs, of the life of Karol Wojtyla up to his election as pope. A valuable reference for students of his life and thought.

**A Free Society Reader: Principles for the New Millennium.** Edited by Michael Novak et al. *Lexington. 414 pp. $65 cloth, $22.95 paper.*

The ideological boxes labeled liberal, conservative, neoconservative, etc. undergo a salutary rearranging by this company of diverse thinkers united by a devotion to freedom, rights, responsibility, virtue, and a market economy within the framework of moral judgment. Eleven major essays by, inter alia, Philippe Beneton, Rocco Buttiglione, Russell Hittinger, Richard John Neuhaus, Thomas Pangle, and George Weigel. An ideal resource for the classroom discussion of political philosophy and practice today.

**If It Ain't Got That Swing: The Rebirth of Grown-Up Culture.** By Mark Gauvreau Judge. *Spence. 122 pp. $22.95.*

Developing an argument published here ("Back to the Future," August/September 1999), the author provides reason for hope that the sundry debasements of popular music during the rock era may be coming to an end. The real youth rebellion, he suggests, may be in the resurgence of the world of swing, where people unabashedly, and with high style, have fun, and are not embarrassed by the fact that men and women are, after all, significantly different. The book is itself great fun, as well as an important commentary on popular culture.

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# THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

## What Jacques Barzun Believes, Maybe

I share fully the pleasure that our reviewer, John J. Reilly, takes in Jacques Barzun's big new book *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life* (FT, November). It is a very big book indeed, coming to almost nine hundred pages with notes. But it is a wonderful read, summing up the learned and sometimes eccentric reflections of a scholar now ninety-three years old. Anne Fadiman has written, "Thank heaven he has lived long enough to complete a book no one else could even have begun." The second part of that is a bit of an exaggeration. John Russell writes with no exaggeration at all, "This book is what used to be called a 'liberal education,' and it should bring that phrase back into favor."

That Professor Barzun is learned, cosmopolitan, amusing, and wise there is no doubt, but I kept wondering what he really believes. In all his masterful displaying of the ideas, philosophies, and artistic representations of reality that have captured minds and souls over these five hundred years, where does Jacques Barzun stand? What are the core convictions that anchor and direct his way of trying to make sense of the world of which we are part? Answers are elusive, for he is sometimes coy, and he tries always to describe sympathetically intellectual and cultural movements of the most maddening diversity. *From Dawn to Decadence* is, as the title indicates, written in an argumentative mode but not in a confessional mode.

But there are here and there glimpses of a creed that sustains Barzun's labors. I do not mean just his aesthetic, moral, and intellectual judgments. The book is riddled with those, which is a large part of its charm. By a creed I mean the comprehensive belief or affirmation that undergirds the lifetime enterprise represented by this remarkable book. The closest thing I could find to such a creed occurs on page 756 in the context of his discussing the sundry existentialisms that produced the literature and theater of the Absurd associated with figures such as Antonin Artaud, Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, and Eugene Ionesco, and that a few decades ago exploded with such unhappy cultural and political effect through the writings of R. D. Laing, Norman O. Brown, and Herbert Marcuse. In an uncharacteristic tone of impatience, Barzun writes:

> However fitting for the times, the existentialist complaint seems puny. It laments because man must make his own goals within a universe that stays aloof. Both are questionable assumptions. It can be argued that man and nature are one: nature is conscious of itself in and through man. And what man has made of the world, intellectually and materially, is his mission—chosen by him, it is true, but so universal that it is tantamount to fated, obligatory. Besides, how strange and unfriendly is nature? It has of course no intentions, friendly or unfriendly; it does not even exist as an entity; it is a man-made construct from his experience and for his purposes. But once taken as such "it" feeds him, it yields in a thousand ways to his handling, and it is beautiful. The sight of it often gives pure mindless joy. To dismiss as mistaken all these links with the cosmos that men have celebrated in worship and song is to forget that if the mind mistakes, it is because it "takes," and that the current submission to the



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absurd is a taking within life, not outside it;
hence not competent to damn it permanently.

What does he mean that the Absurdists were "taking within life, not outside it"? What can be outside life? Only, it would seem, upper case Life. He contrasts the Absurdists with earlier modernists, such as the Dadaists of Zurich in 1916. They, too, recognized and represented the absurd dimensions of existence, but they did not leave it at that; the absurd did not have the last word. Unlike them, the later practitioners of the Absurd "set off no spark of positive electricity, no rebellion against the absurdity of the Absurd." Then this: "In contrast, earlier philosophies used life as the very source of sanity; it was the measure of rightness, not vulnerable to corruption. The distinction was implicit between Life and *our* life at the moment; and the new thought, the new art showed what Life demanded. Even the Stoics, who did not dance with joy at the idea of being alive, left life and the cosmos their validity. The Absurd marks a failure of nerve."

The story line of *From Dawn to Decadence* is, in Barzun's telling, a failure of nerve. A failure of nerve to do what or to be what? A failure to live in the truth that "Nature is conscious of itself in and through man. And what man has made of the world, intellectually and materially, is his mission—chosen by him, it is true, but so universal that it is tantamount to fated, obligatory." A life lived in that truth is a life lived in response to what Life demands. At the risk of attributing to Barzun a theology that is not his, one is reminded of Abraham Joshua Heschel's declaration, "Man is the cantor and caretaker of the universe." There is no doubt about Barzun's profound humanism, his devotion to the human project. And, although he is confoundedly reticent about it, there would seem to be no doubt that his devotion is sustained by the confidence that the project is in response to an obligation not entirely of its own creation. As to what that obligation and the promise attending it might be, perhaps Prof. Barzun will overcome his reticence and tell us in his next book.

FT

# TIRED TAXONOMIES

He wrote a fine biography of Whittaker Chambers and is currently writing a biography of William F. Buckley, Jr., so I suppose it is understandable that Sam Tanenhaus is attentive to the squabbles over the definitions and incessant redefinitions of "conservatism." Who is and who is not one, and of what kind? It is a subject for which I have severely limited patience. I don't mean to sound coy or suggest that I am above the squabbles that preoccupy mere mortals. Goodness knows, I spend a good deal of my time making arguments, countering opposing arguments, taking positions, and advocating that we should do this rather than that. It is simply that I can't work up much interest in the taxonomical disputes over which arguments and which positions belong in this ideological box rather than that.

But some attention must be paid when the taxonomists grossly misrepresent the work in which one has a part. Writing in the *New York Times*, Tanenhaus revisits, yet again, the "neoconservative" phenomenon, fretting over what is right, what is left, what is center, etc., etc. Nothing new in that, but then we come to this: "And a turning point came in 1996, when a group of Christian conservatives affiliated with the political-religious publication FIRST THINGS declared a virtual war on the American government and proposed solutions ranging from 'civil disobedience' to 'morally justified revolution.' This extremism contradicted everything neoconservatives stood for."

Where to begin? Maybe with the fact that our critique of the judicial usurpation of politics in 1996 and since is advanced by both Jews and Christians; or with the fact that the argument is entirely supportive of the American constitutional order; or with the fact that nobody in these pages has proposed civil disobedience, never mind revolution, as a solution, although we have with great care discussed the theoretical and historical responses to legal injustices—hardly an extremist subject in light of the American experiment, from its eighteenth-century beginnings to the civil rights struggle under Martin Luther King, Jr.

The locution "Christian conservatives" is telling. The neoconservative story is essentially a Jewish story; it is the last part of the last chapter of the endlessly retold legend of "the New York intellectuals." Non-Jews make occasional appearances, but Mr. Tanenhaus writes as a Jew about Jews for Jews. "Christian conservatives" are something else. In urging that neoconservatives drop the prefix and acknowledge that they are, quite simply, conservatives, Irving Kristol, the "godfather" of the neocons, is saying that the story of the New York intellectuals is over. Mr. Tanenhaus, however, is stuck on the last chapter.

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As for his alleged turning point, Mr. Tanenhaus tells me that he has read the original 1996 symposium, although not the continuing discussion in these pages, nor the several books that have appeared in this connection. What he did read he did not, I would suggest, read carefully. Except for my friend Norman Podhoretz's book, *My Love Affair With America*, in which Norman used the 1996 symposium as a ploy to prove that he hasn't lost his propensity for fighting with his friends. The fight was entirely one-sided, and Norman and I are anything but—to use the title of his earlier book—ex-friends. So much for Tanenhaus' great turning point.

As Norman knows, I do wish he would stop claiming that, in criticizing this journal, he was combating "anti-Americanism on the right." But one understands that he has been writing and living the story of "making it" since long before he published the controversial book by that title. The saga of his journey from Brooklyn to the Upper East Side is indeed a tribute to America, and to his talented tenaciousness. Unlike Groucho Marx who memorably said that he wouldn't want to belong to a club that would accept him, Norman is inclined to the view that his being accepted puts the club beyond criticism. His unilateral revision of the club rules, however, is not likely to gain many adherents. While I find it mildly annoying to be accused of anti-Americanism, it has the dubious merit of balancing the many critics, on both the right and the left, who have over the years charged this journal and its Editor-in-Chief with excessive devotion to the American experiment. In any event, we will go on making the arguments that we have been making, and do so, I trust, with friendships intact. It's the American way.

As for the important questions involved, there is, so far as I know, not one neoconservative cited in Tanenhaus' article who disagrees with the substance of this journal's analysis of the problem of judicial usurpation. It may be that there are some who deny that there is a transcendent referent by which this government can be brought under moral judgment, which strikes me as a denial that should be impossible for any serious Christian or Jew. And some are obviously made nervous by any discussion of legitimate and illegitimate government—at least with respect to this country—despite America's founding truths, such as the Declaration's claim that "just government is derived from the consent of the governed." Discussion of those questions will continue as occasion requires. Meanwhile, the taxonomists will also go on churning out articles and books on Whither Conservatism? Whither Liberalism? Whither the Left? Whither the Right? Whither Whitherism? It is for the most part a harmless obsession, although one wishes it were pursued with greater attentiveness to the facts.

FT

# TO SAY THAT JESUS IS LORD: PART TWO

In the last issue we commented on the declaration *Dominus Iesus* (Jesus the Lord) issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in September, and on various reactions to it. In an unusual public expression of differences within the Curia, Edward Cardinal Cassidy, who heads the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, has carefully distanced himself from the tone, although not the substance, of the declaration. He and others have suggested that parts of the text, notably those dealing with ecumenism, could and should have been phrased with greater care for the sensibilities of non-Catholics. It is a view with which I have some sympathy, although it may well be that the straightforward—one might almost say stark—propositions of the document will serve as a bracing reminder that the only unity that we should seek is unity in the truth. Clarity in facing disagreements gives credibility to agreements.

A harsh but not unrepresentative reaction to *Dominus Iesus* is offered by Brazilian liberation theologian, Leonardo Boff. In a long attack, he says the document represents "the Roman system—immutable, implacable, cruel, and pitiless." Cardinal Ratzinger of CDF "has appointed himself the executioner of the future of ecumenism." "Only an old, bitter, and fading church could produce such a melancholic and spiritually corrupt text" setting forth doctrines that represent the Vatican's "thirst for power." Along the way, however, Boff does render a service by highlighting what is theologically at stake. "In the end this document, a supreme expression of totalitarianism, would say to everyone, in a cruel and merciless way: without Christ and the Church you have nothing; and if just by chance you were to possess something positive, it would not be because it is from you, but because it comes from Christ and the Church." Ratzinger, complains Boff, would put public revelation in the past, whereas we should be open to present and future public revelations, including from different religions such as the Aztec, Buddhist, Hindu, and other traditions.

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Whether all salvation is through Christ and the gospel of Christ proclaimed and lived by the Church has, of course, been the question for centuries. Without Christ and his Church we would indeed be eternally lost. Or so orthodox Christians of whatever denomination believe. The question is whether Jesus the Christ is one expression, one emanation, one revelation of God among others, or is, as we say in the creed commonly called the Nicene, "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father." Of course the orthodox Christian claim is scandalously audacious—some say arrogant—in the twenty-first century, as it was in the first and in all the centuries in between. The question is whether it is true. If it is true, it is good news for everyone, for the one God intends his one plan of salvation to be for everyone.

Given the storm of reaction and misrepresentation, not all of it so extreme as Boff's, Pope John Paul II took the occasion of his Angelus address on October 1 to clarify what the CDF declaration does and does not say. It is a very careful statement that rewards close reading.

"With the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*—Jesus is Lord—approved by me in a special way at the height of the Jubilee Year, I wanted to invite all Christians to renew their fidelity to him in the joy of faith and to bear unanimous witness that the Son, both today and tomorrow, is 'the way, and the truth, and the life' (John 14:6). Our confession of Christ as the only Son, through whom we ourselves see the Father's face (cf. John 14:8), is not arrogance that disdains other religions, but joyful gratitude that Christ has revealed himself to us without any merit on our part. At the same time, he has obliged us to continue giving what we have received and to communicate to others what we have been given, since the Truth that is has been given and the Love which is God belongs to all people.

"With the Apostle Peter, we confess that 'there is salvation in no one else' (Acts 4:12). The Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, following the lead of the Second Vatican Council, shows us that this confession does not deny salvation to non-Christians, but points to its ultimate source in Christ, in whom man and God are united. God gives light to all in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation, granting them salvific grace in ways known to himself (*Dominus Iesus*, VI, nn. 20-21). The document clarifies essential Christian elements, which do not hinder dialogue but show its bases, because a dialogue without foundations would be destined to degenerate into empty wordiness.

"The same also applies to the ecumenical question. If the document, together with the Second Vatican Council, declares that 'the single Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church,' it does not intend thereby to express scant regard for the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities. This conviction is accompanied by the awareness that it is not due to human merit, but is a sign of God's fidelity, which is stronger than the human weaknesses and sins solemnly confessed by us before God and men at the beginning of Lent. The Catholic Church—as the document says—suffers from the fact that true particular Churches and Ecclesial Communities with precious elements of salvation are separated from her.

"The document thus expresses once again the same ecumenical passion that is the basis of my encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*. I hope that this Declaration, which is close to my heart, can, after so many erroneous interpretations, finally fulfill its function both of clarification and of openness. May Mary, whom the Lord on the Cross entrusted to us as the Mother of us all, help us to grow together in our faith in Christ, the Redeemer of all mankind, in the hope of salvation offered by Christ to everyone, and in love, which is the sign of God's children."

FT

# INVITED TO A REVOLUTION

As best I can calculate, it was 1956 or 1957 when I was a seminarian at Concordia, St. Louis, and during the summer I was peddling Fuller Brush products in the north country of Ontario. Since I was only a temporary, I was assigned a rural territory with a handful of villages and farm houses few and far between. But one could make some decent money, at least by the reckoning of that time. The deal was that one got a straight 50 percent on sales of brushes, waxes, mops, and sundry other items with which—or so the sales pitch put it—no household should be without. I discovered that getting orders was a lot easier than getting payment when I delivered the goods a week later. Nothing new in that, I suppose. It was much the same the summer I sold Wearever pots and pans. The next summer it was life insurance. I was particularly good at persuading young ladies that lots of insurance would increase their marriage prospects. I am embarrassed to recall that spiel. It was effective, though, and they signed up eagerly—only to promptly default on paying the premiums, which wiped out my commission. Typically, there was a father in the picture who took a very different view of a young man selling his eighteen-year-old daughter a large life insurance policy.

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It was in the Fuller Brush summer, however, that I stumbled across the Madonna House Lay Apostolate, nestled by the Madawaska River in the Laurentian wilderness of Combermere, close by Barry's Bay and Wilno, the last being the first Polish settlement in Canada. My purpose was just to sell brushes, and I didn't know what I was getting into. I am not entirely sure that I actually met "the Baroness," Catherine de Hueck Doherty. I think I did, but it must have been very briefly, for, from what I know now, any extended encounter with her would certainly be remembered. I also don't remember whether I made a sale there. Probably not, since the people of Madonna House take a vow of poverty and try to live on what they can produce themselves or beg from others. But the people with whom I talked for an hour or so impressed upon me that this was a very different place. In the years following, I would reflect from time to time on that odd community and what they told me about their way of life, and about their foundress, a Russian aristocrat who talked with God and, more interestingly, taught what she had learned when God talked with her, which, or so it was said, He regularly did. It all seemed a little strange, as in fanatical.

Much later, I came to a better appreciation of Madonna House and the Baroness. In addition to Combermere, where there are about a hundred lay "staff workers" and ten priests, some twenty other houses around the world have sprung up in response to Catherine's invitation: "We need to be poor! Let us live an ordinary life, but beloved, let us live it with a passionate love for God. Become a mystery. Stretch one hand out to God, the other to your neighbor. Be cruciform. Christ's cross will be our revolution and it will be A REVOLUTION OF LOVE!" Each year hundreds of lay people, religious, and priests visit Combermere and the other houses to be formed for a week or more in Catherine's way of radical discipleship. This past summer I returned again to Combermere.

She was not, technically speaking, a baroness, since Russia did not have such a title, but she was from wealth and nobility. The media gave her the title when she arrived in Canadian exile following the Bolshevik revolution and it stuck. To say hers was an eventful life is to understate egregiously. Between her birth in 1896 and her death in 1985, she served as a nurse with the Russian army in World War I and with the poignantly hopeless White Russian army after the revolution; she married a Russian ne'er-do-well, gave birth to a son to whom she was an indifferent mother; supported herself and her family as a successful anti-Communist lecturer; established houses to serve the poor and advance interracial friendship in Toronto, Chicago, and Harlem, in which connection she was often compared with her friend Dorothy Day. After an annulment, she married the then noted journalist Eddie Doherty, and when their world fell apart following her rejection by the movement she had launched, they fled to Combermere. What seemed like the end was the beginning of Madonna House. These few words cannot begin to suggest the tumultuousness of this extraordinary life. The story is well told, not without a critical edge, in *They Called Her the Baroness* by Lorene Hanley Duquin (Alba House).

Dozens of her books and booklets have been kept in print by Madonna House Publications. I frequently have an ambivalent response to the writings of the founders of spiritual movements. What their followers hail as flashing spiritual insights often seem a bit obvious and even banal, and one just knows these founders must have been much more impressive in person. Some of Catherine's publications are mainly transcripts of talks given at Madonna House, full of exclamation points and assertions in the upper case. One gathers that she herself was an exclamation point. From her writings and from conversation with those who knew her well, I expect she must have been quite impossible a good deal of the time. Her tone is relentlessly intense, imperious, and flaming with the passion of discovered love. The little book, *Dear Father: A Message of Love to Priests*, can be summed up: "Yes, but do you believe, do you *really* believe, the wonder of who Christ is and you are for him? Show it! Live it!" One is reminded of Chesterton's remark that the only sin is to call a green leaf gray. Catherine railed against a world and a Church that seemed so indifferent to the luminosity of love. (*Dear Father* also contains an excerpt I had quite forgotten from Thomas Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain*, in which he tells of Catherine's influence on his vocation.)

For *Poustinia*, perhaps her most influential book, she must have had a good editor. The exclamation points and upper case excitements are muted in this strongly moving account of a practice of silence, solitude, and prayer drawn from the Russian experience of pilgrimage and time apart in which *poustiniki* live in a small hut—for days or months or years, or for a lifetime—in an isolation that is also total availability to the community. The heart of the *poustinia* is *kenosis*, joining Christ in the emptying of the self, as described by Paul in Philippians 2. "I think that God calls the *poustinik* to a total purgation, a total self-emptying," writes Catherine. She cautioned against the impulse to be relevant by doing something useful as the world measures usefulness. "If you want to see what a 'contribution' really is, look at the Man on the cross. That's a contribution. When you are hanging on a cross you

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can't do anything because you're crucified. That is the essence of a *poustinik.* That is his or her contribution." *Poustinia* is one of the more insightful and disturbing books on prayer I have read in a long time.

As with Dorothy Day, Catherine's "cause" has been accepted by Rome and it is possible that somewhere down that path she may formally be declared a saint. Also like Dorothy Day, Catherine's faith and piety came to be viewed as "conservative" because so radically orthodox. (Catherine was baptized in the Russian Orthodox Church and part of the continuing apostolate of Madonna House is reconciliation between East and West, a purpose close to the heart of John Paul II.) Many who admire Dorothy Day are prepared to overlook her orthodoxy for the sake of the radical politics of her Catholic Worker movement. It is harder to do that with the Baroness since she more clearly distanced the Madonna House Apostolate from the political exploitation of its members' dedication to live for and with the poor. But both Dorothy and Catherine understood that orthodox Christianity is ever so much more radical than the radicalisms that the world regularly throws up to challenge or recruit Christian faith; and they understood that the way of high adventure is not to trim the Church's teaching but to penetrate ever more deeply into living the mystery of Christ.

The last half century, and especially the years of this pontificate, has witnessed an astonishing resurgence of renewal movements. Among the better known in North America are Cursillio, Opus Dei, Focolare, Legionaries of Christ, Regnum Christi, and the Neocatechumenal Way. The explosion of similar movements in Latin America and Africa is perhaps without historical precedent. These are mainly movements of lay people, married and celibate, locked in communal determination to live the gospel of Jesus Christ without compromise. The Madonna House Apostolate is part of this remarkable phenomenon. Father Robert Pelton at Combermere—a personable, gentle, and wisely innocent priest—says he does not know where the apostolate will go in the future, but he knows that he does not need to know. It is enough that the life of Catherine de Hueck Doherty—in both its pyrotechnical brilliance and silent deeps—begat a movement that has changed lives beyond numbering by its invitation to a disciplined adventure into a revolution of love. (For more information: Madonna House, Combermere, Ontario, Canada, K0J 1L0 or www.madonnahouse.org)

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# TRUTH FOR TOLERANCE

So many pundits weighed in on the question of Joe Lieberman and religion, but few so provocatively as Clifford Orwin, professor of political science at the University or Toronto. Orwin writes in the *National Post* under the title "Religion in the Public Square" that when he was growing up in Chicago, ethnic and religious bonds made a big difference, for better and for worse. "But everything has changed (and not in all respects for the better)," Orwin writes. "William Julius Wilson, the brilliant American sociologist, has written from a quasi-Marxist perspective of 'the declining significance of race.' His phrase applies equally to religion. This decline is vast and obvious. The real threat facing North American Jews today is neither intolerance nor evangelism nor the 'Aryan' lunatic fringe. Rather it's an aspect of excessive tolerance (of nominal Christians toward Jews and of nominal Jews toward Christians). The seventeenth-century Jewish renegade philosopher Spinoza dreamed of a liberal world where Jews would cease to be Jews even as Christians ceased to be Christians. That world now looks uncomfortably close to realization. Intermarriage rates have soared exponentially, because to so many young people (and, increasingly, their parents) the old distinctions just don't matter. If your child is marrying a nice person, you don't ask for more. What remains of religion in mainstream North America is one thing only: a diffuse moralism accompanied by a vague conviction that religion supports morality. Polls purporting to show that Americans are highly religious reflect only this. (Try asking an American to explain what distinguishes his denomination from others. He'll soon assure you that all religions are the same at bottom.) Most Americans simply equate religion with morality. Whether the moral person is Christian or Jewish or Sikh or a native American shamanist just doesn't matter anymore. (When I lectured in Massachusetts recently a Wiccan cabdriver explained to me what his alleged paganism stood for: feminism, environmentalism, and the Golden Rule). Americans may go to church more often than other modern peoples, but what they learn in church is this gospel of universal toleration. All good people go to heaven."

Orwin overstates the case, but only somewhat. Of course, Orthodox Jews and orthodox (also upper case) Christians are distressed by such a depiction of our circumstance, and may want to insist that the

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greater measure of mutual respect in our society is in fact grounded in biblical faith. As indicated by the general reaction to the recent Vatican statement *Dominus Iesus* (The Lord Jesus), which reiterated the traditional claim that Jesus Christ is the one way of salvation—also for those who are not Christians—in our culture the assertion that some religious claims are true and others false, or even less true, is taken as a sin against tolerance. In reaction to such muddled thinking, there are those who suggest that the test of vibrant religion is the readiness to declare that those who do not share one's understanding of the truth will go to hell. Thus the debate is unhappily skewed in a way that pits dogmatic thugs against relativistic wimps.

The never-ending task for Christians is to make clear that their respect for others is not despite but because of their Christian faith. The alternative to tolerance premised upon indifference to truth is a lively pluralism premised upon the conviction that the truth both requires and makes possible our mutually respectful engagement of the differences that make the deepest difference. It is probable that only a minority of Christians understand and embrace that alternative, but then it has probably always been the case that most Christians are, at least most of the time, not terribly serious or reflective about what they say they believe as Christians.

There is nothing wrong with the claim that "all good people go to heaven," if we understand that the good is inseparable from the true. The tolerance that, implicitly or explicitly, denies the reality of truth recruits religion to the service of the American Way of Life, which then becomes, not to put too fine a point on it, an idol. The circumstance and the temptations described by Prof. Orwin have been with us since the beginning of the American experiment, and in fact go back much earlier. The adherents of the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus have always been tempted to settle for His being tolerated as one of the gods of the tribe or nation. But He remains a jealous God because truth is jealous. Truth refuses to split the difference with falsehood.

Tolerance, rightly understood, is obedience to St. Paul's injunction to "speak the truth in love," which, in turn, is premised upon love for the truth. In this light, the "gospel of universal toleration" is not to be despised. Most Christians are not theologians, which is just as well, nor given to making fine distinctions, which is perhaps unfortunate but inevitable. When they tell pollsters that religious differences make no difference in their respect for others, many, if not most, Christians probably believe that that is what is required by the commandment to love one's neighbors. What social scientists register as religious indifference may in fact be, to cite Paul again, "faith active in love." It may be. Who knows? God knows. And one day He will let us know.

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## CIVIL RELIGION OR PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY

Traditional language about "Christian America"—which once served both liberal and conservative purposes, as those terms are used today—was vigorously attacked by the school of "Christian realism" associated with Reinhold Niebuhr and his brother, H. Richard Niebuhr. From the late 1930s through the 1960s, Reinhold in particular assumed a "prophetic" mode in debunking any idea of the "chosenness" of America. This was part and parcel of his attack on the idea of moral progress (see "The Idea of Moral Progress," FT, August/September 1999). In the regnant liberalism of the time, three ideas came together: the idea of moral progress, the idea of American chosenness, and the idea of a socialist utopia. This made for a heady mix that Niebuhr condemned as a snare and delusion. He employed his impressive polemical powers against the notion that history can be understood in terms of a conflict between "the children of light and the children of darkness." With almost mantra-like repetition, he underscored the "ironies" and "ambiguities" of history.

The Niebuhrs did their job well, perhaps too well in some quarters. While a Niebuhrian sensibility of skepticism toward historical delusions is to be cultivated, it was essentially a corrective against the excesses of the "Redeemer Nation" theme. In mainline Protestantism and in the liberal culture more generally, that skepticism was employed in a polemic against what was perceived as an anti-Communist crusade during the Cold War years. From the 1950s through the end of Soviet Communism in 1991, that crusade was portrayed as a contest between "the free world" and "godless communism." In other words, the children of light against the children of darkness. The attempt to check that exaggeration, an exaggeration frequently freighted with hubris and self-righteousness, reinforced an attitude aptly

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described as anti-anticommunism. In this view, the great evil was not communism but anticommunism, a cause presumably discredited by the excesses of Senator Joseph McCarthy. The anti-anticommunism that McCarthy did so much to abet lived on long after his censure by the Senate and his pitiful death in 1957.

The story of American religion during the Cold War years, so closely connected with the idea of Christian America, still awaits historians who can untangle its knotted complexities. In retrospect, it is generally recognized, also by those who scoffed at the notion at the time, that there really was something very much like a free world that stood in sharp contrast to the tyranny of a communism that was "godless" in its aggressive atheism. Except in the most diehard circles of the left, it is not controversial today to refer to Soviet Communism as an "evil empire." That was not the case in oldline Protestantism—meaning, roughly, those churches belonging to the once influential National Council of Churches—only a few years ago. From the mid-1960s until very recently, the Vietnam War was in these quarters taken as definitive proof that talk about a free world was a lie, and a good many religious leaders frankly believed that, for all its faults, communism was "the wave of the future." In this view, as it was conventionally asserted, the United States was "on the wrong side of history."

Even more common—indeed so common as to constitute a secure liberal consensus—was the belief that communism was a permanent feature of world history, or at least it would endure as far as we could see into the future. Many expected and encouraged a "convergence" between communism and the free world (the latter being defined as capitalism). All who participated in this consensus were committed to "peaceful coexistence" with communism. Figures such as Pope John Paul II, Ronald Reagan, and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who made no secret of their belief that Soviet Communism was a temporary and unsustainable aberration, were routinely criticized for threatening that peaceful coexistence.

As I say, American religion during the Cold War is a fascinating story that is yet to be told adequately. For present purposes, I simply note that the period resulted in an emphatic repudiation—and not only among oldline Protestants—of the last remnants of the idea of Christian America. Other factors contributed to that repudiation, notably the convergence of the civil rights movement with anti-anticommunism, and the passions surrounding the Vietnam War. Under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the civil rights movement was typically an affirmation of the American experiment, as most memorably articulated in his great "I Have a Dream" speech of August 28, 1963. His argument was that slavery and racial segregation contradicted the essential creed and character of that experiment. That was the liberal position. The later and more "radicalized" argument of the "new politics" would be that slavery and segregation, far from contradicting America, convicted America of being essentially racist, in addition to its inherent sins of militarism, imperialism, and propensity for the capitalist exploitation of the world's poor. It followed that only the enemies of Christianity would want to call such a country Christian.

### *A Replacement Religion*

Prior to what many perceive as the anti-American turn of what is comprehensively (perhaps too comprehensively) called The Sixties, the idea of Christian America had been sharply modified, and in some ways replaced by, the idea of an American "civil religion." This was influentially set forth in Will Herberg's book of 1955, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology.* Herberg, a Jew and a great admirer of Reinhold Niebuhr, spoke of the American way of life as "the characteristic American religion, undergirding life and overarching American society despite indubitable differences of religion, section, culture, and class." During those years and up to this day, a statement presumably made by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1954 is frequently quoted: "Our government makes no sense unless it is founded on a deeply felt religious faith—and I don't care what it is." While it has never been documented that the statement, first cited in the *Christian Century,* was ever made by Eisenhower, the sentiment fit perfectly Herberg's thesis. As Sydney Ahlstrom wrote in his monumental *A Religious History of the American People,* "The postwar form of civil religion debased the older tradition which had reverenced [America] as a bearer of transcendent values and summoned citizens to stewardship of a sacred trust."

Now even that debased form of the American Way of Life as a civil religion has little currency in our public discourse. Beginning in the late 1960s, sociologist Robert N. Bellah and others tried to revive the civil religion argument, adapting it to the stringent critique of America favored by the left, but their efforts never caught on beyond students of religion in the academy. By the 1970s the doctrine, assuming dogmatic status, had been firmly established that America is a secular society. At least it appeared to be firmly established. When in 1984 I

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published *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*, it was generally viewed as a provocative—some thought eccentric and even dangerous—challenge to what "everybody knew" about the secularity of America. Still today there are those who contend that the dangerous argument of that book is that the naked public square should be replaced by the sacred public square. My argument then and now, however, is that the naked public square—meaning public life stripped of religion and religiously grounded morality—should give way not to a sacred public square but to a civil public square.

Writing in the *New York Review of Books*, the late J. M. Cameron was sympathetic to the argument of the book but suggested that the kind of religiously legitimated public philosophy that I called for required a credal form of Christianity with rich intellectual resources, such as Catholicism, rather than the revivalistic Protestantism now insurgent in American public life. The latter form of "fundamentalism," he believed, had long since been bagged and stuffed by H. L. Mencken and was of no possible use in public moral discourse. It is a point that should not be dismissed lightly. At the same time, Cameron's view does not take into account the degree of credal seriousness, albeit confusingly articulated, among Baptists and others, or the richer intellectual resources of the minority Calvinist tradition within evangelical Protestantism. Equally important, it fails to reckon with initiatives such as "Evangelicals and Catholics Together," launched in the early 1990s, which give expression to a growing convergence in both cooperative action and theology. In this convergence, Catholic social doctrine, and particularly the power of natural law philosophy, are challenging conventionally secular habits of public debate.

### *Civil Religion Untethered*

The reconstructed public philosophy that is required could provide a secure foundation for the civil public square. The civil public square is one in which different convictions about the common good are engaged within the bond of civility. The "common good" is—and we can never tire of making this point—unavoidably a moral concept, and that means the religiously grounded moral convictions of the American people cannot be excluded from the public square. Given the role of religion in American culture, both historically and at present, a religion-free public square is a formula for the end of democracy. To exclude the deepest convictions of the people from the deliberation of how we ought to order our life together is tantamount to excluding the people from that deliberation, and that is the end of democracy. We need not be delayed here by the old debate, still pressed by many conservatives, over whether our constitutional order is that of a democracy or a republic. Suffice it that the Constitution itself, as unanimously asserted by the Founders, is that of a republic, but it rests on the democratic premise that political sovereignty rests with the people. The Declaration of Independence declares that "just government is derived from the consent of the governed." As the political sovereign, the people are authorized to name a sovereignty that they acknowledge to be higher than their own; for instance, "the laws of Nature and of Nature's God." This is not, as some claim, a formula for theocracy. It is an exercise of democratic authority through republican or representative means by which the people place a check upon their own power by designating the higher authority to which they hold themselves accountable.

The civil public square requires something not entirely unlike Herberg's civil religion. The problem with calling it a civil religion is that most Americans think they already have a religion and are not interested in exchanging it for another. For this reason among others, it is better to say that the civil public square requires a public philosophy attuned to the Judeo-Christian moral tradition. A Judeo-Christian moral tradition is not a Judeo-Christian religion. A moral tradition is part of religion but by no means the whole of it; nor, especially in Christianity, is it the most important part. But it is a necessary part. Sustaining the Judeo-Christian moral tradition in public requires that Americans who are Christians recognize that tradition as theirs, and recognize that it is necessarily dependent upon Judaism, both historically and at present. Here, too, it becomes apparent that cultivating the Jewish-Christian relationship is much more than a matter of interfaith politesse; it is essential to reconstituting the moral basis of our common life.

Civil religion, when it is untethered from biblical religion, can become a rival religion. Some Christian thinkers would go further and say that civil religion is by definition a rival religion. Such was surely the case with, for example, the religion of America's "manifest destiny" mentioned earlier in this series on Christian America. In that instance, Christians succumb to a notion of the "Redeemer Nation" that is disengaged from, and becomes a competitor to, their Redeemer. The perennial attempts, commonly called "Wilsonian," to assert some grand national purpose within the world-historical scheme of things are usually Christian in inspiration but end by aspiring to take the place of Christianity. If I am right in thinking

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that Henry Luce of *Time* was premature, that it is the twenty-first century that is "the American century," it is certain that America will be safe neither for itself nor for the world without a guiding public philosophy. And it is, I believe, equally certain that any public philosophy that might be constructed will not be democratically sustainable unless it engages in a fresh way the idea of Christian America.

FT

# WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ That time of year comes around once more, and John Grondelski, who teaches Christian ethics at Seton Hall University, says we should not take it lying down: "One hears endless calls for 'tolerance' and 'civility.' But those calls invariably ask Christians to be 'tolerant' and 'civil' about being gagged in public life. No one seems to ask, in the name of pluralism, that the atheist 'tolerate' the crèche. No, the civility is all on one side and the toleration is a sham—in which Christians are complicit so long as they play by the current misconceived rules. So, yes, Virginia (and Rhode Island and Jersey City and Pittsburgh and Scranton) . . . 'tis the season to fight injunctions. Christmas (or Hanukkah or Ramadan) is only truly worth celebrating when Christians (or Jews or Muslims) can proclaim—even on the public square—their unadulterated messages. That is what American religious freedom is about, not about holiday scenes that hide Jesus in his manger behind the jolly snowman Frosty and the red-nosed reindeer Rudolph."

■ At the cottage up in Quebec there is no newspaper, so following morning prayer it's breakfast with the splendid eleventh edition of the *Britannica* for chortles. George and Joan Weigel come up with the family and the day begins with regaling one another with our findings, both luminous and ludicrous, in those twenty-nine volumes. Of the ludicrous kind, an annual favorite is the long entry on Beethoven which, while acknowledging his debt to Bach, ends with this thumping conclusion: "And it is as certain as anything in the history of art that there will never be a time when Beethoven's work does not occupy the central place in a sound musical mind." Meaning no offense to those of unsound mind who disagree, that central place is of course occupied by Johann Sebastian Bach. Confirmation of this is to be found, were confirmation needed, in Christoph Wolff's magnificent new biography, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician* (Norton). (See Briefly Noted, FT, November.) Admittedly, the book is not terribly well written, but its literary deficiencies are far outweighed by its exhaustiveness. There is almost nothing of interest that Wolff overlooks, including the minute examination of which works borrowed from which and exact tracings of the master's endless revisions. In this he follows Johann Forkel, who wrote in his 1802 biography, "I have had opportunities of comparing . . . many copies of his principal works, written in different years, and I confess that I have often felt both surprise and delight at the means he employed to make, little by little, the faulty good, the good better, and the better perfect." Now that is the judgment of a sound musical mind. Wolff writes, "Forkel does not exaggerate. . . . One need only compare the initial melodic contour of the principal theme of the 'Confiteor' fugal movement from the *B-minor Mass*, as notated in the autograph score, with its final shape. Here Bach changed the third note in order to avoid undue emphasis on the third syllable of 'confiteor,' thereby also mollifying the melodic flow of the subject. A revision such as this is not driven by any other than a purely musical consideration. . . . It shows the degree of attention he paid to the most subtle details of his scores, increasingly with advanced age and growing experience as a teacher-composer." Apart from strictly musical considerations, I came away from *Johann Sebastian Bach* with a renewed appreciation of how admirable a human being Bach was. At the risk of provoking disbelief among those who know me well, I confess that I was humbled to recognize how pitifully small is my talent and what I have done with it in comparison with the greatness of Bach. It may alleviate somewhat the shock of that spasm of unwonted humility if I add that the same applies to almost everybody else who has ever lived. Years ago, when over lunch I told my friend Norman Podhoretz that I had decided to become a Catholic, there was a long silence. His expression was one of deep concern, and finally he came out with, "But what about Bach?" It had not occurred to me that I might lose him, and, the musical drivel in most Catholic parishes notwithstanding, Christoph Wolff's excellent book reassures me that I have never more securely possessed or been possessed by the incomparable gift that is Johann Sebastian Bach.

■ Unlike many New Yorkers, I have a deep and abiding affection for Chicago. Living there during my internship was my first experience of a really big city and confirmed for me that I am an incorrigibly

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urban person. It was therefore with keen anticipation that I came to the new biography of Mayor Richard J. Daley by Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor, *American Pharaoh* (Little, Brown). I hold no brief for the legendary Mayor Daley. When I was a delegate to the 1968 Democratic convention, I, along with many others, got beat up a little by his police for leading an unauthorized protest march on Michigan Avenue and spent a night in his jail. (Back then, everything in Chicago was "his.") In the first few pages of *American Pharaoh* we are informed that Richard Daley was a product of an authoritarian Catholic Church, a racist, a man with an insatiable appetite for power, and a buffoon. With that conclusion in place, the following six hundred pages merely fill out the details of the indictment. The authors grudgingly acknowledge, because it can hardly be denied, that, at a time when other big cities were on the skids, Daley revitalized the downtown and prevented a wholesale middle class flight to the suburbs, thus laying the foundation for the flourishing metropolis that Chicago is today. But even when he did the right thing, they say, he acted from the worst motives of bigotry and self-aggrandizement. His damning sin in their eyes is that he did not create a city integrated by race and class. Today almost everybody recognizes the disaster of "vertical slums" such as the Robert Taylor housing project, but the authors never face up to the fact that no American city is integrated in the way that they think is morally imperative, or that most urban experts now agree that, even with the best will, it simply cannot be done for many reasons, including the simple demographics of race. This is something on which Nathan Glazer of Harvard has written in melancholic detail, as has been discussed before in these pages. In 1963, Martin Luther King took his movement north, forming the Chicago Freedom Movement and calling for an "open city." He soon left, defeated and demoralized. Cohen and Taylor put all the blame on Daley. The reality is that neither Dr. King nor anyone else had a plan for racial integration that would not have radically destabilized the city, turning Chicago into, for instance, another Detroit. The authors pretty much reduce the high drama that is the wondrously various worlds of Chicago to little more than a good guy/bad guy story line of righteous protesters nefariously foiled by a bigoted and brutal fool. There is undoubtedly much for which Daley can and should be criticized. But *American Pharaoh* demonstrates once again that biographers who have neither sympathy for nor curiosity about their subjects end up writing very dull books. To make the story of Richard J. Daley dull is a disappointment. To make the great city of Chicago dull is an unforgivable achievement.

■ Peter Berkowitz of George Mason Law School, a sometime contributor to these pages, takes on the rational choice theorists and their game plans. Nobody doubts that there is an economic dimension in human actions. "Economics casts light," writes Berkowitz, "but economicism casts darkness." Here is his conclusion that is, I think, both ringing and right: "But finally the law really cannot do without the dignity of man, if it is to command the assent and even the awe that it must command. To strip the law of its majesty, man must first be divested of his dignity. There may be rationality in all these clever actors making strategic moves for the aggrandizement of their interests; but there is not much dignity. Are men and women who have been divested of their dignity worthy of respect by the law? And is a law that has lost its majesty capable of commanding the respect even of these rational actors? These are questions, at once empirical and moral, that turn on the structure of the soul, or, if you prefer, on the logic of human desire. However these questions are finally answered, it is reasonable to believe that the game-theoretical standpoint, in its quest for comprehensiveness, diminishes us, if in no other way than by making us small in our own eyes. Insofar as we are small, game theory may explain what we do; but we are not only small."

■ This is the kind of thing you stumble across in a new collection, *The Quotable Knox*, edited by George Marlin et al. and published by Ignatius: "When you compare Christianity with Confucianism, you are comparing two systems of personal morality. When you compare Christianity with [Islam], you are comparing two forms of fighting enthusiasm. When you compare Christianity with Buddhism, you are comparing two streams of mystical tendency. And, unconsciously, you have recognized that Christianity is something greater than the other three; because each of those others corresponds to one particular need, one particular mood." Monsignor Ronald Knox was one of those writers for whom the phrase "the wit and wisdom of . . ." seems to have been coined. The above quote does short-change the mystical tradition in Islam, but that is an Islam whose face is largely hidden from the West, and thus the quote remains eminently quotable.

■ "I am a Christian because Christianity makes more sense of more facts than any other way of thinking I know of." I first ran across that statement many years ago, I believe in something by Reinhold Niebuhr, and it greatly impressed me. That's not the whole reason for being a Christian by any means, but it is a supporting consideration. Thoughtful human beings

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look for a total explanation, a "theory of everything," as it is sometimes called. On religion more generally, practitioners of evolutionary sociobiology, which is the soft underbelly of evolutionary biology, are today claiming that people are religious because religion has a strong survival value. Thus E. O. Wilson in *Consilience*: "There is a hereditary selective advantage to membership in a powerful group united by devout belief and purpose. . . . Much if not all religious behavior could have arisen by natural selection." Lionel Tiger in *Optimism: The Biology of Hope* writes that religion is universal and is fundamentally about hope. "Optimism is a biological phenomenon. Since religion is deeply intertwined with optimism, religion is a biological phenomenon rooted in our genes." So it is that evolutionary theory, which led many to believe there is no God, now purports to explain why we believe there is. In the absence of something that makes more sense, it makes a kind of sense. Fortunately, explanations that make more sense are not absent.

■ Students should take control of their education, or at least know what they're getting into. That's the purpose of a handsome series of books published by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute. Each is "A Student's Guide To" and the books include Ralph McInerny on philosophy, R. V. Young on literature, John Lukacs on history, James V. Schall on liberal learning, and Mark Henrie on the core curriculum. They are all basic, as in attending to the essentials, and are available free to students and teachers from ISI Books, P.O. Box 4431, Wilmington, Delaware 19807.

■ What is to be done about the world's poor? Over the last thirty years and more few people have given such relentless and acute attention to that question as Peter Bauer (Lord Bauer), now Professor Emeritus of Economics at the London School of Economics. Most welcome, therefore, is the publication of *From Subsistence to Exchange and Other Essays*, a collection of Lord Bauer's thoughts on a wide range of pressing topics, with an introduction by Amartya Sen, winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize in Economics (Princeton University Press, 153 pp., $19.95). One could pick out any number of excerpts for special attention; for instance, the essay "Population Explosion: Disaster or Blessing." Going back to Malthus in the late-eighteenth century, it has been said that the problem of poor people is that there are too many of them. Today American foundations, NGOs at the United Nations, world development institutes, and, lamentably, the U.S. government pour huge sums into countering the "population crisis" which, it is routinely asserted, is the chief obstacle to improving life in LDCs (less developed countries). "The crisis is invented," writes Peter Bauer. "The central issue of policy is whether the number of children should be determined by the parents or by agents of the state." The fear of population growth, he continues, is based on fundamental misperceptions. "These apprehensions rest primarily on three assumptions. The first is that national income per head measures economic well-being. The second is that economic performance and progress depend critically on land and capital per head. The third is that people in the Third World are ignorant of birth control or careless about family size: they procreate regardless of consequences. A subsidiary or supporting assumption is that population trends in the Third World can be forecast with accuracy for decades ahead." In addition, there are some rather unseemly moral assumptions at work. "Some have argued that high birthrates in LDCs, especially among the poorest, result in lives so wretched as to be not worth living: that over a person's life, suffering or disutility may exceed utility. If this were so, fewer such lives would increase the sum total of happiness. This view implies that external observers are qualified to assess the joys and sorrows of others. It implies that life and survival are of no value to the people involved. This outlook, which raises far-reaching ethical issues, is unlikely to be morally acceptable to most people, least of all as basis for forcible action to restrict people's reproductive behavior, especially when it is remembered how widely it was espoused about the poor in the West only about two generations ago. Nor is this opinion consistent with simple observation, which suggests that even very poor people prefer to live rather than not to live, as is shown by their striving to remain among the living by, for instance, seeking medical help to prolong their lives. Thus these considerations make clear that the much-deplored population explosion of recent decades is seen more appropriately as a blessing rather than as a disaster because it reflects a fall in mortality, which is an improvement in people's welfare, not a deterioration." The essay concludes with this: "Throughout the less developed world, the most prosperous groups and areas are those with most external commercial contacts. And such contacts also encourage voluntary reduction of family size. Thus, extension of such contacts and the widening of people's range of choice promote both economic advance and reduction in fertility. In these circumstances, the reduction in family size is achieved without the damaging effects of official pressure on people in their most private and vital concerns. Yet this type of policy is not on the agenda of advocates of

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the need for fewer children in LDCs. It is widely agreed that the West should not impose its standards, mores, and attitudes on Third World governments and peoples. Yet, ironically, the most influential voices call for the exact opposite when it comes to population control." Not here but elsewhere, Bauer and others point out that, instead of trying to impose statist controls on poor countries, the rich nations of the West might better attend to the real crisis of their own population decline, notably in countries such as Italy, Spain, and Germany, where, extrapolating from present replacement rates, entire peoples might disappear in the next century. Fortunately for both rich and poor countries, it is a repeatedly demonstrated error to think that "population trends . . . can be forecast with accuracy for decades ahead."

■ Professional communicators "attempting to meet their responsibilities deserve audiences conscientious about theirs." That's in a new statement from the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, an office of the Vatican. I rather like that. We hardworking writers have a right to equally hardworking readers. In truth, at this journal we've never had occasion to complain about the quality of our readers, although we would always like more of you. The document goes on to say that Jesus is a model for communicators: "In his communications he showed respect for his listeners, sympathy for their situation and needs, compassion for their suffering (e.g., Luke 7:13), and resolute determination to tell them what they needed to hear in a way that would command their attention and help them receive the message, without coercion or compromise, deception or manipulation." For which, the document does not add, he was crucified.

■ I do not understand it. The rule of the barbarians is not so total as to preclude its receiving review attention. After all, it is published by a mainstream press, St. Martin's. Yet nowhere have I seen a notice of Felipe Fernandez-Armesto's scintillating, erudite, and wise little book with the self-consciously pretentious title, *Truth: A History and a Guide for the Perplexed.* I know, you've had it up to here with chatter about relativism, postmodernism, deconstructionism, and all the rest. But give this Oxford historian (author of *Columbus, Millennium,* and *Reformations*) a hearing. In the course of his learned ramblings on the ideas that got us into the fix we are in, he serves up glittering wit and swashbuckling polemics, but, withal, an informed hopefulness. There is, for instance, this: "Underlying the traditional truth-tests of humankind, and enfolding the concepts to which they are related, there is a notion of the sacred. Words which seem unrelated have the same ancestry: verity and virtue; order and rite; arithmetic and dharma. They all share the same Indo-European root. The search for truth is a struggle: part of a war against chaos, a strenuous ritual to wrest reality from doubt by naming its parts, or a spell to save it from being engulfed in nothingness. Relativism, subjectivism, and deconstruction could all break the spell. Truth could be relativized out of the lexicon, or left as just another name for falsehood; without objects to speak of, the subject could become an unheard voice, crying in an unpopulated wilderness; deconstruction could demolish every utterance and every sign, leaving only a cosmic smirk hanging in the *néant,* like the disappearance of the Cheshire cat. These barbarous programs might succeed; civilizations have sometimes succumbed to destroyers and history is a path picked across their ruins. More often, however, the barbarians have ended up by joining the civilizations they threaten. They get seduced or absorbed and end up making constructive contributions of their own. I think there are good grounds for hoping this will happen with the truth-vandals who face us today. First, because they have some good points on their side, which seekers for truth can appreciate. Second, because they are not all implacable enemies; some of the most devastating critics of recent times, including Foucault and Derrida, were fellow-seekers who despaired or who, striving to rescue truth from false conceptions of it, overdid their efforts. Finally, there are loops in their arguments which, if we follow them boldly, lead back to truth." *Truth: A History and a Guide for the Perplexed.* St. Martin's Press. 257 pp. $23.95. It is a very good book. And that's the truth.

■ Many people have written insightfully about the linguistic contortions that necessarily follow when one buys into the mendacity of denying that abortion does what abortion does. But I had not come across this one before. It occurs in a special issue of the *New York Times Magazine* devoted to impending technological changes that will presumably change our lives. (The entire issue is reminiscent of the superficial futurism of the 1939 New York World's Fair. *Plus ça change . . .*) The article is titled, "The Genetic Report Card That Will Tell You If Your Embryo Will Get Prostate Cancer." Not "an embryo" but "your embryo." Imagine your friend happily announcing, "Jim and I are having an embryo." The "having" doesn't quite work, since it is tilted toward the future, suggesting that the embryo might become something else—maybe a baby. She might try, "We have an embryo, and next month we're expecting a fetus." But that seems to fall somewhat short of doing justice to the element of continuity regarding the phenomenon in

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question. And the "we" is an egregious intrusion into a purely personal and private circumstance. In addition, the point of the "genetic report card" is that "your embryo" might get a failing grade and next month you will have nothing. The important thing is to keep attention focused on the "your," as in your ingrown toenail, or your extra weight, or your whatever. It is a condition you picked up somewhere along the way and, if it turns out to be a problem, you get rid of it. In this case, the "it" is, in fact, a he or she. But that is the fact that must not be admitted. "Your embryo." The trope requires painful twistings of both mind and language. "Oh, what a tangled web we weave / When first we practice to deceive."

■ The long-standing liberal line on McCarthyism, says the liberal Thomas Powers, must be junked. In an essay in the *New York Review of Books*, he evaluates some of the new books on what we now know about Soviet intelligence and concludes: "Once the new evidence is frankly faced no one can write the history of McCarthyism and the early Cold War without taking into account that the hunt for spies was based on the fact that there were spies—lots of them; that those spies began with an idealism shared by a significant minority of the American people; and that the defensive response of many American liberals not only was wrong on the facts, but also exacerbated the suspicions of the right, making it easier for demagogues to argue that progressive causes and treason somehow went hand in hand." In addition to the merits of truth, there is an element of self-interest in this new candor. The material from Soviet intelligence includes hundreds of code names for American spies not yet exposed, and liberals should start telling the truth, says Powers, "before the Russians further thicken the stew by telling us who was hiding behind the other half of those 349 cryptonyms."

■ From the quiet part of Yale that he helps to sustain, philosopher Louis Dupré has for decades been providing us with some of the more convincing analyses of why modernity is at war with the spiritual life. *Symbols of the Sacred* is a kind of summing up of what he has learned (Eerdmans, 168 pp. $20 paper). I have long been uneasy with what I am inclined to think is Dupré's excessive emphasis on the secularism of our time and his accent on personal experience largely disengaged from the institution of the Church, but this book is rich fare, as is all his writing. The last chapter is an interview with Dupré in which he reflects on a Christian humanism that must of necessity be attentive to movements of the Spirit evident in other religions and cultures: "It would be wrong, however, to regard these analogies as justifying a syncretistic relativism that entitles each person to compose his or her own religious collage. This attitude, all too common today, shows a lack of respect not only for one's own faith but also for those faiths one so casually dismantles for spare parts. It is yet another manifestation of that radical anthropocentrism, the main enemy of sincere religion, that tempts believers to bring the language of transcendence down to the level of purely human wants and choice. Without detracting from the providential nature of other faiths, Christians cannot ignore the fact that this same Providence has led them to a faith that is not a 'choice' but, for those chosen to it, an absolute summons. To relativize faith is, I think, to subvert its fundamentally divine character."

■ "It appears that most non-evangelicals have little more to fear from the majority of ordinary evangelicals than being thought of as spiritually or morally mistaken, and thus prayed for, shown a life of good example, and occasionally offered a word about one's relationship to God. . . . These may be things that non-evangelicals would prefer to do without. But they are hardly views and practices that threaten civil American pluralism and democracy." So writes Christian Smith in *Christian America? What Evangelicals Really Want* (University of California Press). On the basis of his research, sociologist Smith concludes that, for most evangelicals, "Christian America" means, for all practical purposes, the American Way of Life, including the Bill of Rights, balance of powers, and the commandment to be nice to people. Not very exciting. Not very threatening either.

■ One of the big names in cognitive neuroscience is the very articulate and media-savvy Steven Pinker of MIT. He is also, unfortunately, very glib in reiterating the weary clichés of the village atheist. Religion, says he, is "constructed from the cognitive modules of the brain, and used to explain certain data that stymie our everyday theories." In other words, religion is for people who cannot live with the world as it is. "But believers avoid working out the logical consequences of these piecemeal revisions of ordinary things and concepts. They don't stop to wonder why a God who knows our intentions has to listen to our prayers, or how a God can both see into the future and care about how we choose to act." That is indeed worth wondering about. It is much like parents who understand and see so much more than their little child but care intensely about how the child comes to understand and see and act. It is called love, and that is really worth a wonder why.

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■ Here's a voice not heard from in a long time. Many years ago, Harvey Cox of Harvard Divinity School wrote *The Secular City*. Now married to a Jew, Baptist Cox writes in the Jewish monthly *Sh'ma* on the possibility of "secular Judaism." He notes that many people who are religious—most Buddhists, for instance—do not believe in God. The Jewish circumstance is different, however. "Unlike Buddhism, loyalty to God has been central to virtually every expression of Judaism for millennia. There are, however, large numbers of people today who consider themselves Jewish and are not theists of any recognizable variety. Many of them yearn for a spiritual home that would preserve their link to the Jewish people and the Jewish past but not require them to hold their breath and try to believe something they just do not believe. . . . I hope a secular Judaism flourishes. I hope it nourishes a sense of mystery and depth, avoiding market values and the success ethic. The question, of course, is whether it will last. But I would prefer not to speculate about that. Only God, so to speak, knows." And maybe He, so to speak, has changed His mind about the loyalty thing.

■ Martin E. Marty's *Context* quotes at length Paul Wilkes' review of Donald Cozzens' *The Changing Face of the Priesthood*, a book not so grim as Wilkes makes it out to be. "Wilkes all but shrieks to get attention for Cozzens' book," writes Marty, but then he goes on to accept his hyperbole at face value. We have, according to Wilkes' shriek, "a church culture that is alarmingly dysfunctional . . . a significant contingent among our spiritual leaders who have not faced their own humanity," and so forth. A chief culprit, if not the chief culprit, is, you will not be surprised to learn, celibacy. I know priests who seem to lead disheveled, harassed lives, forever snatching at the grace that recruited them and will not let them go. Most of the studies we have suggest that priests are a pretty happy lot, despite the aggravations that attend the human condition. My seminary teaching and other contacts with younger priests in no way fit the Wilkes picture of dysfunctionality desperately longing for "the transformation of the priesthood" that progressives demand. A manifest sense of purposeful confidence and satisfaction is undoubtedly related to the increase in priestly vocations in recent years. Reading Marty on Wilkes on Cozzens, I was reminded of a conference some while back where a speaker was addressing the problem of "priestly burn-out." I was seated beside an older bishop, a veteran of many crises real and alleged, who leaned over and said sotto voce, "Of course we always got problems, but with most of the priests who tell me they're burned out, I never noticed they were on fire to begin with."

■ With a wit that I cannot avoid the temptation to call brilliant, Tom Wolfe writes in *Harper's* on the "Land of the Rococo Marxists." His subject is why no one is celebrating the second American century, and, yes, he has a villain: the intellectual. "But if there was decadence, what was decaying? Religious faith and moral codes that had been in place since time was, said Nietzsche, who in 1882 made the most famous statement in modern philosophy—'God is dead'—and three startlingly accurate predictions for the twentieth century. He even estimated when they would begin to come true: about 1915. 1) The faith men formerly invested in God they would now invest in barbaric 'brotherhoods with the aim of the robbery and exploitation of the non-brothers.' Their names turned out, in due course, to be the German Nazis and the Russian Communists. 2) There would be 'wars such as have never been waged on earth.' Their names turned out to be World War I and World War II. 3) There no longer would be Truth but, rather, 'truth' in quotation marks, depending upon which concoction of eternal verities the modern barbarian found most useful at any given moment. The result would be universal skepticism, cynicism, irony, and contempt. The First World War began in 1914 and ended in 1918. On cue, as if Nietzsche were still alive to direct the drama, an entirely new figure, with an entirely new name, arose in Europe: that embodiment of skepticism, cynicism, irony, and contempt, the Intellectual." Wolfe takes his readers on a wondrous romp through the fevers of academic and political correctness, finally asking what it is that they really want. Despite their protestations to the contrary, it cannot be that they want change. Change might mean they would have to go to work, taking on the hard tasks of understanding, reason, scholarship, and the acquisition of knowledge. So what do they want? "It's a simple business at bottom. All the intellectual wants, in his heart of hearts, is to hold on to what was magically given to him one shining moment a century ago. He asks for nothing more than to remain aloof, removed, as Revel once put it, from the mob, the philistines . . . 'the middle class.'" Wolfe knows that he will be accused of sympathizing with the prejudices (which can be a very good word) of ordinary Americans, and even of the cardinal sin in the catechism of intellectuals, namely, patriotism. To which he responds, paraphrasing Patrick Henry, "If this be patriotism . . . make the most of it!"

■ "But we secularists are the ones who protect your right to be religious," said a distinguished professor responding to my lecture. My answer is that he had it quite backwards. I should have had in hand this fine article by David Novak in the *Virginia Law Review*.

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Novak is making the point that only those who can establish human rights as natural rights are able to check the power of the humanly created state, making sure it remains our servant and not our master. He writes: "Without such prior obligation and its protections, our rights as humans cannot trump the power of the state because they are derived from that very power that, without true covenant, can easily take away what it has given. So those who would interpret Grotius' dictum literally, that we can have law 'even without God' (*etiamsi non sit Deus*), and who claim that de facto atheism is the only cogent basis for commitment to a democratic polity, have no basis for rationally challenging the unjust exercise of state authority, which is the very antithesis of constitutional democracy. Ironically, those whose god is neither the cosmic order nor the orderer of the cosmos have their human rights protected for them by the democratic commitments of those who have a moral religion or a religious morality. But how, then, can our doctrinaire secularists attempt to exclude their very protectors from the conversation any democracy needs to justify its own life and future?"

■ The retirement of Gerald H. Anderson after almost twenty-five years as editor of the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* provides occasion for bringing that excellent publication to the attention of our readers. There was a time when, for both Protestants and Catholics, missions (in the plural) was a staple of parochial piety, prayer, and preaching. Today, as John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* reminds us, the very mention of missions is an embarrassment for many Christians who are captive to the multiculturalist aversion to the claim that there is a truth to be shared with all. *IBMR* bears refreshing testimony to the large community of thoughtful Christians who have kept the faith by sharing the faith. Protestant in origin but vibrantly ecumenical under Anderson's leadership, it is published by the Overseas Ministries Study Center (490 Prospect Street, New Haven, Connecticut 06511).

■ The claim that popular music of the rock, rap, satanist, and druggie varieties has a strong connection to real-world behavior is often lightly dismissed. The evidence, however, is very impressive indeed. Both scholarly and anecdotal testimony is usefully pulled together in an eighteen-page booklet by Thomas L. Jipping, "'There is a Virus Loose Within Our Culture': An Honest Look at Music's Impact," published by the Free Congress Foundation (717 Second Street, NE, Washington, D.C. 20002). The quote in the title is from the Governor of Colorado following the Columbine High School killings. Parents, clergy, and teachers may want to have a copy of this study at hand.

■ A reader is upset about what she calls our "continuing campaign of defamation against Christians and Catholics specifically." Our offense, she says, is that we have referred to non-Jews as gentiles. She writes, "Quite rightly, other terms used by a group to define those outside—i.e., infidel, pagan—have been excluded from public discourse because those so defined found them offensive. We find 'gentile' offensive and demand the same respect you accord other religious/ethnic groups." As an unoffended person, I feel excluded from the writer's "we." But then, we goys are used to that.

■ Margaret Atwood's hysterical rant of the 1980s, *The Handmaid's Tale*, depicts an America that in the year 2002 has been turned by the "religious right" into the Republic of Gilead. In this new order, women of child-bearing age who have been divorced or slept around are given to God-fearing but childless couples and undergo impregnation sessions by the man of the house, called the Commander. Given the anti-American fever raging in much of Europe, it is perhaps not surprising that the Royal Danish Opera has given Poul Ruders' adaptation of the novel a splashy world premiere. There is a telling phrase in George Loomis' rave review in *Opera News*. "Ann Margrethe Dahl, as the authoritarian 'Aunt' Lydia, made one think of some twisted version of *Dialogues des Carmelites* as she presided over the handmaids, singing her high-flying phrases with fearsome intensity." A twisted version that assigns the martyrs the role of the perpetrators of the Great Terror. The reviewer intends that as praise.

■ It is not sufficient to say that the French are virulently anti-American, or possessed by ressentiment over the loss of the glory that once was France in world history. Among intellectuals and in the political culture (the two being joined in a way that is not the case in America), there is a need to make everything explicit, an intolerance of human untidiness. Which of course results in even more untidiness, often of an embarrassingly silly sort. Thus the war against McDonald's as a threat to the French way of life, and the official tribunals guarding the linguistic borders against the invasion of English. Now the government has established the Interministerial Mission to Battle Against Sects (MILS). It is headed by the former foreign minister, M. Alain Vivien, who says, "In the United States,

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freedoms are crazy. In the name of the First Amendment of the American Constitution, which forbids legislation on religious matters, one can say and do anything." A parliamentary report lists 172 groups as "sects," including the Southern Baptists. The Catholic Church in France, which still has some clout, could reap honor by speaking out against MILS and the pitiful mindset it represents. For the sake of religious freedom. For the sake of rescuing France from its penchant for appearing ridiculous.

■ It was a narrow escape, but Dutch authorities say they will not prosecute Pope John Paul II for the crime of inciting homophobia. Charges were brought by the Dutch magazine *Gay Krant* after the Pope criticized the gay pride march in Rome last summer (which turned out to be something of a flop). In the course of his remarks, the Pope said that the Church considers homosexuality "objectively disordered" and homosexual acts "against natural law." The Dutch court said in a statement that his elevated position as head of the Catholic Church and of the Vatican state gave him "global immunity from jurisdiction." But don't think that that means you can get away with it.

■ "If, five hundred years from now, the ordination of women has come and gone, [but] is viewed by some scholar as a historical curiosity worth his further investigation, he will find in *The Close* a revealing hint or two as to why it failed." That is Sarah E. Hinlicky reviewing a book of that title by Chloe Breyer on her first year as a student at Episcopal General Theological Seminary in New York. Hinlicky, who is a student at Princeton Theological Seminary and supports the ordination of women, quotes Breyer: "Like many people of my age and gender, I put most of St. Paul's writings into the category of things despite which I call myself Christian. My list of disclaimers includes the Crusades, the excommunication of Galileo, the Pope's stand on abortion and birth control, and most of the activities of the extreme religious right." Breyer adds that she developed "a grudging respect for the apostle's passionate, practical campaign to bring Christianity out from the umbrella of Judaism," and is sure that had he lived today he would support "the rights of gay men and women" and other favored causes. Hinlicky comments that Paul gains Breyer's "respect" at the cost of becoming a mirror of her own fashionable convictions. "In all too many passages [Breyer] manifests the ugly qualities of—and I do not use this term lightly—a bigot, utterly unaware of it and shockingly lacking in critical awareness." Hinlicky concludes: "The ordination of women is not a foregone conclusion. It is a young movement, a significant break from previous practice, and by no means widely accepted. Let Breyer's account leave no room for doubt that mere feminism, unchecked and unreformed by the gospel, is going to derail and destroy the cause for which it cares most. Women are going to fail in the parish and pulpit as long as they are spoon-fed ideology instead of theology and as long as they are taught liberation from patriarchy instead of liberation from sin." (*The Close* is published by Basic Books.)

■ It does seem odd that the committee of bishops charged with implementing *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* has appointed four consultants nominated by the Catholic Theological Society and other academic groups that are on record as strongly opposed to implementing *Ex Corde Ecclesiae.* I am told that the bishops are seeking the widest possible cooperation in fulfilling their mandate, which is only right. That surely includes consulting *with* opponents of that mandate. But appointing them as consultants and thus making them partners in doing what they think should not be done at all? On the other hand, it is understandable that the opponents of what the bishops overwhelmingly approved are eager to contain the damage of what they view as grave episcopal error. One observer says that this arrangement is a little like asking the foxes to assist the chickens, which is, I think, an unfortunate metaphor that might all too easily be misunderstood. But the arrangement does seem odd.

■ "You may have heard accusations or rumors that CTA (Call to Action) is pro-abortion. This is not true." The response to an inquiry says that "What CTA tries to do is to serve as a forum where Catholic people with various perspectives on the issue can dialogue." "We have no organizational connections to CFFC (Catholics for a Free Choice)" although it "is one of those organizations that we work with on church reform issues." The CTA letter, sent in response to an inquiry by a FIRST THINGS reader, says that among "the range of 'life issues' that our members work on are: opposing the death penalty, working for peace, supporting the ban on land mines, and calling for the closing of the U.S. Army School of the Americas because many of its graduates are responsible for human rights abuses." CTA adds, "Many members undoubtedly subscribe to the late Cardinal Bernardin's seamless garment principles." The implication is that other members make an exception for abortion. So is CTA, which

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claims to have among its members six hundred religious and priests and six bishops, pro-abortion? If an organization described itself as a forum where people with various perspectives on anti-Semitism can dialogue, one might reasonably think it is at least open to the view that there is something to be said for anti-Semitism. As has been observed in another connection, when you come across an article titled "Whither Incest?" you do not expect to read a vigorous argument in opposition to the practice.

■ The editors of the *New York Times*, our parish newsletter, are cheered by the number of institutions that are withholding support from the Boy Scouts because that organization excludes leaders who, it has reason to believe, may be homosexually active. The editors say that "the organization needs to realize that a growing number of donors will question its claim to belong on the center stage of American life if it continues asserting a discriminatory philosophy." And who defines what is the center stage of American life? Need you ask? Then comes a categorical moral judgment of sweeping exclusionary implications: "In today's world, children cannot learn about honor from an organization that views homosexuality [i.e., acting on homosexual desires and identifying oneself as one who so acts] as a moral defect." It follows that children cannot learn about honor from the churches and synagogues to which around two-thirds of the American people belong, nor from what is certainly the majority of parents in the country. The center stage is getting emptier and emptier all the time, if you believe the left wing is center stage.

■ During the UN summit of world leaders, Fidel Castro, age seventy-four, donned his battle fatigues to address a rally of cheering supporters at Riverside Church up on Morningside Heights. The Reverend Bernard Wilson, executive minister of Riverside, said the church was pleased to host the event. "Riverside has always been on the cutting edge of what is happening in the world," he said. The rheumatoid religious left moves boldly, if creakingly, into the second half of the twentieth century.

■ I watched one episode of Bill Moyers' *On Our Own Terms*. Maybe I've been thinking and writing too much about death in recent years, but it seemed to me terribly superficial, and one felt sorry for the people and their families who turned the most intimate and truth-demanding moments of their lives, unrepeatable moments, into something to be retailed on PBS by Moyers Inc. Yes, I know, they probably meant well and were told that it was a public service, and nobody should accuse them of publicity seeking, but it was a grave disservice to themselves and to a time that should be protected by reticence within the small community where love's hard work must be done. Dave Andrusko, editor of *National Right to Life News*, stayed with the whole six hours, and went on to examine the various book tie-ins and other promotions connected with the series. He calls the series an "infomercial for assisted suicide." That may seem hard, but let him explain: "It is one thing to 'demystify' death, if what is meant by this is that we must face up to the fact that no one gets out of this life alive and that when we are dying it is crucial that there be people near by to sustain us with love and affection. That connectedness, that assurance that we will never be abandoned is crucial to ensuring that people do not become despondent and contemplate suicide. But it is quite another when people start to romanticize the 'last days,' to make our departure sound like preparing for a permanent ski trip. Be highly skeptical of people, like Bill Moyers, who gush about death. Too often that kind of 'enthusiasm' leads to an eagerness to help the patient pack and depart early." Andrusko is right about that, but I keep thinking of the sadness of people who turned their long and last goodbye into what was, after all the chatter about its being a public service, a show.

■ As for the annual Erasmus Lecture (this year by papal biographer George Weigel), there were many more requests for tickets than there were seats. We are sorry that some were disappointed, but, as we have said before, tickets are handled on a first-come-first-served basis, and we don't know a better way of doing it. A hint to subscribers: ask for tickets when you first see the notice in these pages. Don't wait for a special notice in the mails. The up side of this, of course, is that the Erasmus Lecture is so very popular. Next fall the fifteenth Erasmus Lecture will be delivered by Rabbi David Novak of the University of Toronto on the future of the relationship between Christians and Jews. Watch for details.

■ A front page story in the *New York Times*, under the heading "Priests of the 60s Fear Loss of Their Legacy," features priests who once thought that Vatican II would usher in a revolution, making the Church an agent of radical social change, but now complain that younger priests do not share their vision. They express bitter disappointment, fearing that their generation is turning out to have been no

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more than a blip on the screen of history. As reporter Diana Jean Schemo writes, "The younger, conservative generation is more interested in sacramental matters and issues of faith." Even worse, it is rumored that the new Archbishop of New York, Edward Michael Egan, may think that a very good thing.

■ "Criticism is still strong. I think it is deplorable that they attack us rather than deal with the issues." So says Robert Funk, seventy-four, founder of the Jesus Seminar, who many years ago got some rich friends to pony up for meetings at which he gathers religion teachers with nothing better to do with their time and with a taste for notoriety who discuss questions such as whether Jesus thought he was the Messiah, and then cast ballots of colored beads to determine the outcome. That's what Mr. Funk calls dealing with the issues. An issue that Mr. Funk insists we deal with—what will his fertile mind come up with next?—is whether God exists. Funk and seventy-five seminar participants will vote on the question at Texas Christian University. The world waits. Says Mr. Funk, "We are discussing the future of God, so to speak." God waits.

■ "Had he been sheltered from the Christian 'star system,' with its voracious appetite for fresh faces and sensational testimonies, might things be different?" The article in *World* on Eric Craig Harrah, a flamboyant homosexual and abortion-clinic operator turned evangelical Christian and pro-life champion, clearly suggests that the answer is yes. Harrah's speaking engagements raised big funds for pro-life groups, and for himself. *The 700 Club* and similar programs hailed him as a convert hero, until only three years after his conversion he publicly repudiated his Christian profession and returned to the gay subculture. Says one pro-lifer, "We in the leadership have taken those who have left [the pro-abortion side] and held them up as our trophies." Says another, "It's almost impossible for us to restrain ourselves from wanting to use them. Exploit is a bit of a strong word, but it's applicable." The moral of the story is that superstars and sensational testimonies are no substitute for the tested endurance of those who bear witness, as the apostle says, in season and out of season.

■ "Banned in Opelousas." That probably won't boost sales as much as "banned in Boston," nor will it likely hurt the reputation of Flannery O'Connor, one of the great writers, as well as one of the great Catholic writers, of the century past. The curious thing is that she is banned at Opelousas Catholic High School in the diocese of Lafayette, Louisiana. A teacher assigned O'Connor's short stories, *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, in which some white folk use the "n" word. The parents of some black students went ballistic. The bishop did not insist on the firing of the teacher, but he did write, "No one can tell another person whether or not he or she should be offended. That is simply a matter of fact and should be respected in so far as is possible. For that reason, I direct that the books in question should be removed from the reading list immediately and other readings substituted for them." "Blessed are they who take no offense at me," said Jesus, at least implying, it would seem, that people should not be offended. Paul says he preaches Christ crucified, "foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews." They were offended. That is simply a matter of fact and should be respected in so far as possible? Okay, so Flannery O'Connor is not to be compared to Our Lord or the gospel, but there is some comparably muddled thinking here. The Bible is full of many lesser stories and statements at which people have been offended for centuries. Okay, so Flannery O'Connor is not the Bible. How about Dante who put homosexuals in hell (although some are also in purgatory on their way to heaven), Huckleberry Finn who had distinctly incorrect views on race and women, or that ugly streak of anti-Semitism in T. S. Eliot, a streak not entirely absent from the writings of G. K. Chesterton? "No one can tell another person whether or not he or she should be offended"? One might have thought that that is what education—in part, but in essential part—is about. Commenting on the scandal created by the bishop's ban, a distinguished literary critic says, "To guard students against O'Connor is to confess a very unseemly and un-Christian cowardice." The fear probably has less to do with the danger that O'Connor might corrupt the minds of impressionable young people and more with the terror of the thought police labeling a Catholic school "racist." Paul may have also had bowdlerizing bishops in mind when he wrote, "I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control." One must hope that the bishop, rekindling the gift, will reconsider his decision.

■ It's only about eight hundred words, the size of an op-ed piece, but it is the cover article in *America*, with a picture of a sick pope and in big letters, "A Disabled Pope?" With the cankered morbidity that characterizes the Jesuit weekly's disposition toward

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this pope, the article reviews the points familiar to anyone who has looked into the matter, expressing deep concern that the "special laws" to be followed if the Apostolic See becomes vacant or impeded have not been drawn up. In fact, the author and editors do not know whether such laws are in place. Well, maybe the author, Father James Provost, does now. He died a month before the article was published. Meanwhile, John Paul II is alive and well—intellectually and spiritually, although weakened physically. The facts will not prevent many more such journalistic handwringings in what will be, God willing, the future years of this pontificate. The secretive ways of the Vatican are such, an old saying has it, that a pope is never officially sick until the day he dies. Which prompts journalists to overcompensate by holding a death watch from the day he is elected. Especially journalists who do not like him very much. There is piquancy in Fr. Provost's spending his last days worrying about the Holy Father's health. It is a quality of devotion to the papacy that is reminiscent of earlier times in the Society of Jesus.

■ We have given favorable attention to the work of Gerald McDermott, Associate Professor of Religion at Roanoke College, Virginia, notably his fine book on Jonathan Edwards and Deism. At hand is a notice from the people at the C. S. Lewis Institute that he is speaking under their auspices. Above his picture is the legend, "Wisdom from America's Greatest Theologian." I expect Dr. McDermott is embarrassed. I didn't even know the post was open. I checked with a number of friends who said they had not resigned.

■ Thomas Merton (1915-1968) was, by virtue of his much writing, a very famous monk. He sometimes worried out loud whether his writing, and his poetry in particular, was consistent with his monastic vocation. The late Father Eamonn O'Sullivan of Butte, Montana, rhymed him the following whimsical counsel. Gethsemani, Kentucky, was Merton's monastery. Cistercians and Carthusians are orders of strict observance established in the eleventh century. Merton had written that he was wondering whether he shouldn't join the stricter Carthusians. Fr. Eamonn's counsel and Merton's response are published with the permission of Fr. Sarsfield O'Sullivan of Butte, who is Fr. Eamonn's brother.

*Thomas Á Gethsemani*
*Baits the cowl with poetry,*
*Who would clap each God-ward man*
*To hell or go Cistercian,*
*Saves for cigarettes a curse*
*Bleak as T. S. Eliot's verse;*
*Might his better blasts address*
*To his indecisiveness.*
*Still tempts heaven every time*
*Thomas puts his hand to rhyme;*
*Still is not entirely sure*
*Writing verse is for the pure.*
*Fear of the Carthusian louse*
*Keeps him from the Charterhouse.*

*Thomas, is it the devil's ruse*
*Tempts you, bookly, go Chartreuse*
*Or stay Trappist? Why not, man,*
*Cast with me, Diocesan?*
*Dante, grant you, boiled in hell*
*Parish clerks—but monks as well.*
*Geoffrey Chaucer, who I hear*
*Banged your friar across the ear,*
*Sent not to rede helle doun*
*Any persoun of a toun.*
*Thomas, Thomas, why the fuss?*
*Simon Peter's one of us.*

*Abelard, who unsettled so*
*Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux,*
*Later came to know this fact*
*By the desert fathers back'd:*
*Prudent clerics learn to flee*
*Maids who'd learn Theology.*
*(Peter, having had his fling,*
*Went Cistercian, solving nothing).*
*Devils not the least deceive*
*Those the parish care would leave.*
*Ars' own Cure, but for God,*
*Might have died Cistercian shod.*
*(Even I might not be saved*
*If I "this? Or that?" behaved.)*

*Thomas, when the monthly bills*
*Dwarf the everlasting hills,*
*When a Ladies-Aid debate,*
*Tempts me from the higher state,*
*Tempts me to the easy way:*
*Vaguely pictured on a wain,*
*Faceless, lest some think me vain.*
*Or, aft, enjoying in a wood*
*My daily photo'd solitude,*
*Juan De La Cruz calls me not;*
*Matthew, Mark, and Luke I've got;*
*Each a stout Diocesan.*
*(That is not to slander Juan—*
*Nor you, Thomas.) Pray for light*
*As a holy Pastor might.*

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*Thomas, you could stand the gaff!*
*Courage! Earn the epitaph:*

*Thomas Merton*
*Happy Man*
*Died a good*
*Diocesan.*

Thomas Merton responded:

*On one point, Eamonn, you're not right*
*The louse, Sir, is a cenobite*
*Indeed I think I have been bitten*
*Eighty times since you have written*
*The main suggestion of your poem*
*Tempts me from my Trappist hoem*
*Such advice no doubt surprisin'*
*Opens up a new horizon.*
*I may not earn that epitaph*
*But you at least have made me laugh.*

■ A company called Armento builds columbariums, a facility for the interment of the ashes of the cremated deceased. A promotional brochure includes this testimonial from St. Luke's Episcopal Church in San Antonio, Texas: "The columbarium is one of the most significant actions in the history of our parish."

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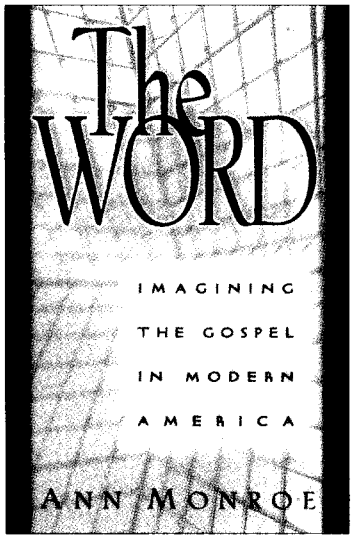


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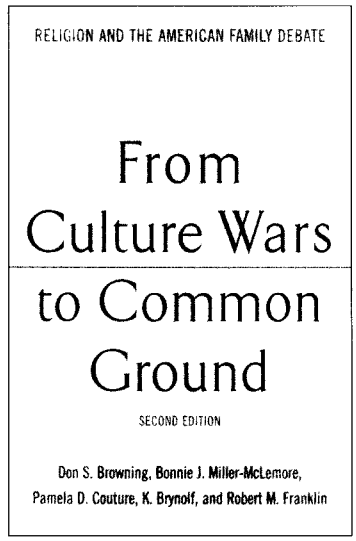
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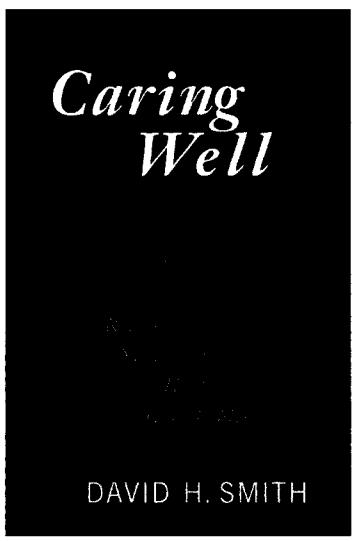


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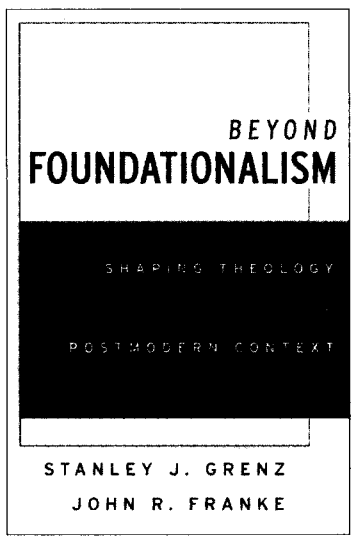


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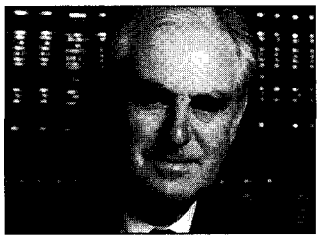

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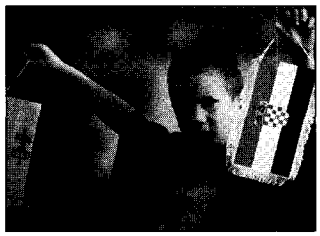

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